Brief 5: Developing State Capacity for Change

State Implementation and Scaling up of Evidence-based Programs Center

Based on the work of the National Implementation Research Network (NIRN)
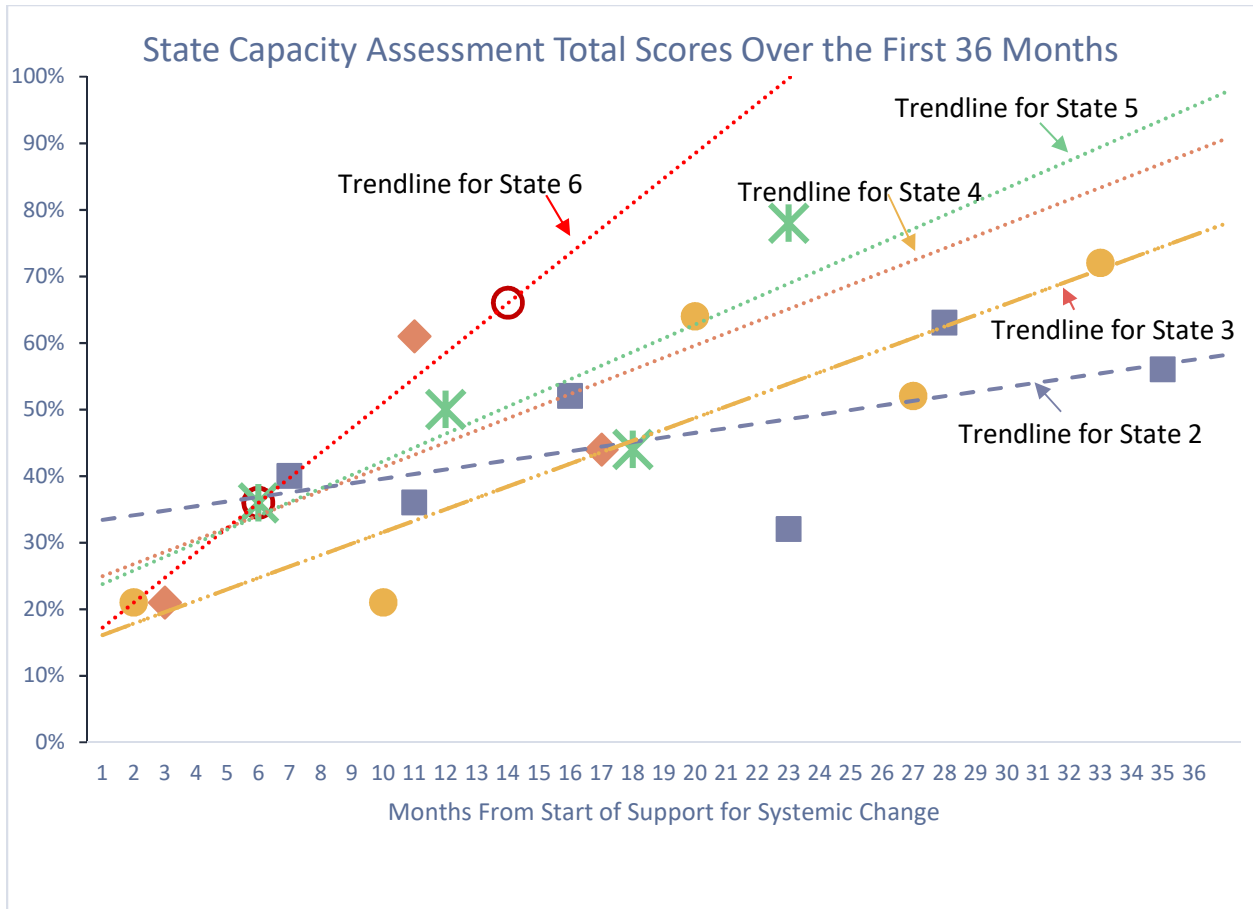The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
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OSEP's Results Driven Accountability is designed to assure educators have the supports necessary to address the needs of all children, including children with disabilities. OSEP-funded Centers are encouraged to support state education systems as they take charge in making systemic changes that lead to improved outcomes for students. Data are now available that demonstrate capacity for change can be purposefully developed in complex state education systems by using active implementation science as a change method. The data are based on a standard measure that has been used to systematically assess capacity development within and across states.

An OSEP goal for Results Driven Accountability is to assure states increase their capacity to support educator's ability to deliver effective practices (see http://nirn.fpg.unc.edu/resources/case-example-us-office-special-education). Educators typically use the term "capacity" to refer to "the perceived abilities, skills, and expertise of school leaders, teachers, faculties to execute or accomplish something specific, such as leading a school-improvement effort." Capacity includes the ability of a school or educator to grow, progress, or improve (http://edglossary.org/capacity). Given this definition, implementation capacity to deliver effective practices focuses on the knowledge, skills, and abilities of individuals who perform critical functions within state education systems. Developing capacity requires changing hearts, minds, and behavior among leaders and educators at every level of a state education system (Blase, Fixsen, Sims, & Ward, 2015).

Systemic Change in State Education Systems

As depicted in data from the *State Capacity Assessment* (SCA; Fixsen, et al., 2015), capacity for systemic change in state education agencies can be developed (see Figure 1). Specifically, the SCA assesses implementation capacity based on a state education agency's current structures, roles, and functions, such as a state leadership team. The SCA is administered twice a year in each state to monitor progress and provide detailed information for action planning. The SCA reflects best practices drawn from implementation science research and the Active Implementation Frameworks (Fixsen et al., 2005). Figure 1 provides SCA data from five states that engaged in a partnership with OSEP's State Implementation and Scaling-up of Evidence-based Programs (SISEP) center. The data show substantial growth in capacity for change in each state during the first three years of SISEP work with the state. Further review of these data also highlight sharper growth trends for states where SISEP applied lessons drawn from earlier partnerships. In effect, SISEP's supports for improving state capacity have become more effective and efficient by using the SCA data for action planning within SISEP.

State Capacity Assessment Total Scores Over the First 36 Months

Trendline for State 6

Trendline for State 5

Trendline for State 4

Trendline for State 3

Trendline for State 2

Months From Start of Support for Systemic Change

Note: There are only two data points for State 5 (in Year 1); there were no usable data for State 1.

Summary

These data offer strong support for OSEP's Results Driven Accountability approach to systemic change. The data provide solid indicators that capacity for change can be purposefully developed in complex state education systems by using active implementation science as the method for supporting change processes. As indicated in Figure 1, methods to support change have been replicated across states. These data demonstrate that state capacity can be systematically established and assessed over time within *and* across states. The process of changing hearts, minds, and behaviors to develop the capacity to use practices leading to educationally significant outcomes for students can be accomplished and documented.

Information about the SCA can be found at
http://implementation.fpg.unc.edu/resources/state-capacity-assessment-sca
Information about the intensive system change work of SISEP can be found at
http://nirn.fpg.unc.edu/learn-implementation/systemic-change and at
http://sisep.fpg.unc.edu/resources/osep-sisep-evaluation-report-2013-2015

References

Blase, K. A., Fixsen, D. L., Sims, B. J., & Ward, C. S. (2015). Implementation science: Changing hearts, minds, behavior, and systems to improve educational outcomes. Retrieved from http://www.winginstitute.org/News-And-Events/Summits/2014-Summit-Summary

Fixsen. D. L., Naoom, S. F., Blase, K. A., Friedman, R. M., & Wallace, F. (2005). Implementation Research: A Synthesis of the Literature. Tampa, FL: University of South Florida, the National Implementation Research Network.

Fixsen, D. L., Ward, C. S., Duda, M. A., Horner, R., & Blase, K. A. (2015). State Capacity Assessment (SCA) for Scaling Up Evidence-based Practices (v. 25). Chapel Hill, NC: National Implementation Research Network. State Implementation and Scaling up of Evidence Based Practices Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

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