



Policy Implications for Advancing Systemic Change for School Improvement

Diffusion of Innovations and Science-Based Practices to Address Barriers to Learning & Improve Schools:

A Series of Information Resources on Enabling System Change

As calls for addressing barriers to student learning and improving schools increase, new directions are imperative. And, this involves more than tinkering with prevailing approaches. The need is for developing major innovations (e.g., comprehensive school-level prototypes) and taking them to scale throughout a school district.

The success of all this depends on stakeholders in public education becoming more knowledgeable about the complexities and strategies related to diffusion of innovations, enabling major systemic changes, and developing a *sophisticated* understanding of the role of empirically-based practices.

To these ends, the Center is producing a series of resources, such as this one, to provide informational aids for use as tools in policy and practice analyses, research, education, and school improvement planning.

Given that systemic change is of central importance in efforts to improve schools and schooling, policy decision makers must recognize and support a growing research and training agenda to advance understanding and capability for designing, implementing, and sustaining prototypes and taking them to scale.

The following policy recommendations are made in the Center report *Systemic Change for School Improvement: Designing, Implementing, and Sustaining Prototypes and Going to Scale* (see list at end of this document for the URL).

These also are included in the article by Center co-directors in the *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation* (2006).

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Research. The nation's research agenda does not include major initiatives to delineate and test models for widespread replication of education reforms. Relatedly, too little attention has been paid to the complexities of implementation and large scale diffusion of empirically supported practices. (Indeed, the emphasis has been mainly on studying diffusion of such practices in terms of the problem of replication with fidelity rather than viewing it as a particular instance of effecting systemic change.) Thus:

Recommendation #1: Elevate the priority status of federal research related to understanding systemic change concerns involved in school improvement. The emphasis should be on building conceptual models and developing and evaluating specific interventions for dealing with the processes and problems associated with introducing, sustaining, and scaling-up (diffusing) new initiatives and reforms.

While it is increasingly common for agencies to include an emphasis on the importance of sustainability of innovations when issuing "Requests for Application" (RFAs), it is unclear how seriously the matter is taken in preparing proposals and in decisions about which are funded. Thus:

Recommendation #2: RFAs for developing and evaluating school interventions should not only focus on the proposed prototype, but should require a strategic plan that details how the work will be sustained beyond the period of funding and how and to what degree it will be replicated.

Pre- and In-Service Training. Both the available literature and our work in the field make it evident that leadership training for education policy makers and administrators has given short shrift to systemic change processes and problems. Thus, it is not surprising to find that most school improvement planning guides do not include a focus on how the improvements will be accomplished, and personnel who are expected to act as change agents in districts and schools have relatively little specific training in facilitating major systemic changes. Thus:

Recommendation #3: Policy makers should ensure that school improvement planning guides are expanded to include a section on how the improvements will be accomplished.

Recommendation #4: A portion of funds allocated for school improvement should be redeployed to underwrite the costs of developing staff for systemic change, especially training for personnel who staff systemic change infrastructure mechanisms.

Recommendation #5. School accountability and certification reviews should be expanded to prominently include concerns related to leadership and staff development for implementing and evaluating the systemic changes needed to accomplish planned school improvements.

Operational Supports and Evaluation Safeguards. Finally, reforms and major school improvements obviously require ensuring that those who operate essential mechanisms not only have adequate training, but also have essential resources and support, initially and over time. Moreover, there must be appropriate incentives and safeguards for individuals as they become enmeshed in the complexities of systemic change. These are matters that require the following school board and administrative actions.

Recommendation # 6: Allocations for every major initiative for school improvement should include a separate, albeit temporary, budget to underwrite the costs of effective systemic change and should reflect a commitment to sustainability.

Recommendation # 7: Special personnel evaluation and accountability procedures should be formulated for use during periods of major systemic change to make allowances for dips in performance as schools cope with the extra-ordinarily complex problems that inevitably arise in pursuing comprehensive school improvements.

A Few Other Related Center Documents and Publications

Systemic Change for School Improvement: Designing, Implementing, and Sustaining Prototypes and Going to Scale. Online at
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/systemic/systemicreport.pdf>

Toward a Scale-Up Model for Replicating New Approaches to Schooling. Online at
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/publications/06%20toward%20a%20scale%20up%20model%20for%20replicating%20new%20approaches.pdf>

Scaling-Up Reforms Across A School District. Online at
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/publications/21%20SCALING-UP%20REFORMS%20ACROSS%20A%20SCHOOL.pdf>

Organization facilitators: A change agent for systemic school and community changes.
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/Report/orgfacrep.pdf>

On Sustainability of Project Innovations as Systemic Change. Online at
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/publications/45%20on%20sustainability%20of%20project%20innovations%20as%20systemic%20change.pdf>

Systemic change for school improvement. (This is an in press article available on request.)

New Initiatives: Considerations Related to Planning, Implementing, Sustaining, and Going-to-Scale. Online at
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/briefs/sustainbrief.pdf>

Sustaining School and Community Efforts to Enhance Outcomes for Children and Youth: A Guidebook and Tool Kit. Online at
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/sustaining.pdf>

Getting From Here to There: A Guide book for The Enabling Component. Online at
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/enabling/gettingfromhere.pdf>

Diffusion of Innovations and Science-Based Practices to Address Barriers to Learning & Improve Schools: A Series of Information Resources on Enabling System Change
(<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/materials/trainingpresentation.htm#fact>)

- >Brief Overview of Major Concepts from E.M. Rogers' Work on Diffusion of Innovations
 - >Brief Overview of Malcolm Gladwell's Concept of the Tipping Point
 - >Some Key Terms Related to Enabling System Change
 - >Systemic Change for School Improvement
 - >Change Agent Mechanisms for School Improvement: Infrastructure not Individuals
 - >System Change and Empirically-Supported Practices: The Implementation Problem
 - >Policy Implications for Advancing Systemic Change for School Improvement
 - >Some Key References Related to Enabling System Change
 - >Excerpts from Child Trends' series of *Research-to Results Briefs* on Adopting, Implementing, Sustaining, and Replicating Evidence-Based Practices
 - > Diffusion: In Pursuit of Action
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Toward a Scale-Up Model for Replicating New Approaches to Schooling. Online at
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/publications/06%20toward%20a%20scale%20up%20model%20for%20replicating%20new%20approaches.pdf>

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Systemic change for school improvement. Online at:
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/publications/Systemic%20Change%20for%20school%20improvement.pdf>

New Initiatives: Considerations Related to Planning, Implementing, Sustaining, and Going-to-Scale. Online at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/briefs/sustainbrief.pdf>

Sustaining School and Community Efforts to Enhance Outcomes for Children and Youth: A Guidebook and Tool Kit. Online at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/sustaining.pdf>

Getting From Here to There: A Guide book for The Enabling Component. Online at
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/enabling/gettingfromhere.pdf>

The Center's Series of Information Resources on Enabling System Change

Diffusion of Innovations and Science-Based Practices to Address Barriers to Learning & Improve Schools

- >Brief Overview of a Major Review by L.W. Green, et al. (2009) entitled: Diffusion Theory and Knowledge Dissemination, Utilization, and Integration in Public Health
- >Brief Overview of Major Concepts from E.M. Rogers' Work on Diffusion of Innovations
- >Brief Overview of Malcolm Gladwell's Concept of the Tipping Point
- >Some Key Terms Related to Enabling System Change
- >Systemic Change for School Improvement
- >Change Agent Mechanisms for School Improvement: Infrastructure not Individuals
- >System Change and Empirically-Supported Practices: The Implementation Problem
- >Policy Implications for Advancing Systemic Change for School Improvement
- >Some Key References Related to Enabling System Change
- >Dissemination Focused on Diffusion: Some Guidelines
- >Diffusion: In Pursuit of Action
- >Excerpts from Child Trends' series of Research-to Results Briefs on Adopting, Implementing, Sustaining, and Replicating Evidence-Based Practices
- >Making and Disseminating Recommendations is Not Sufficient
- >Intro to Multi-Level Community Based Culturally Situated Interventions