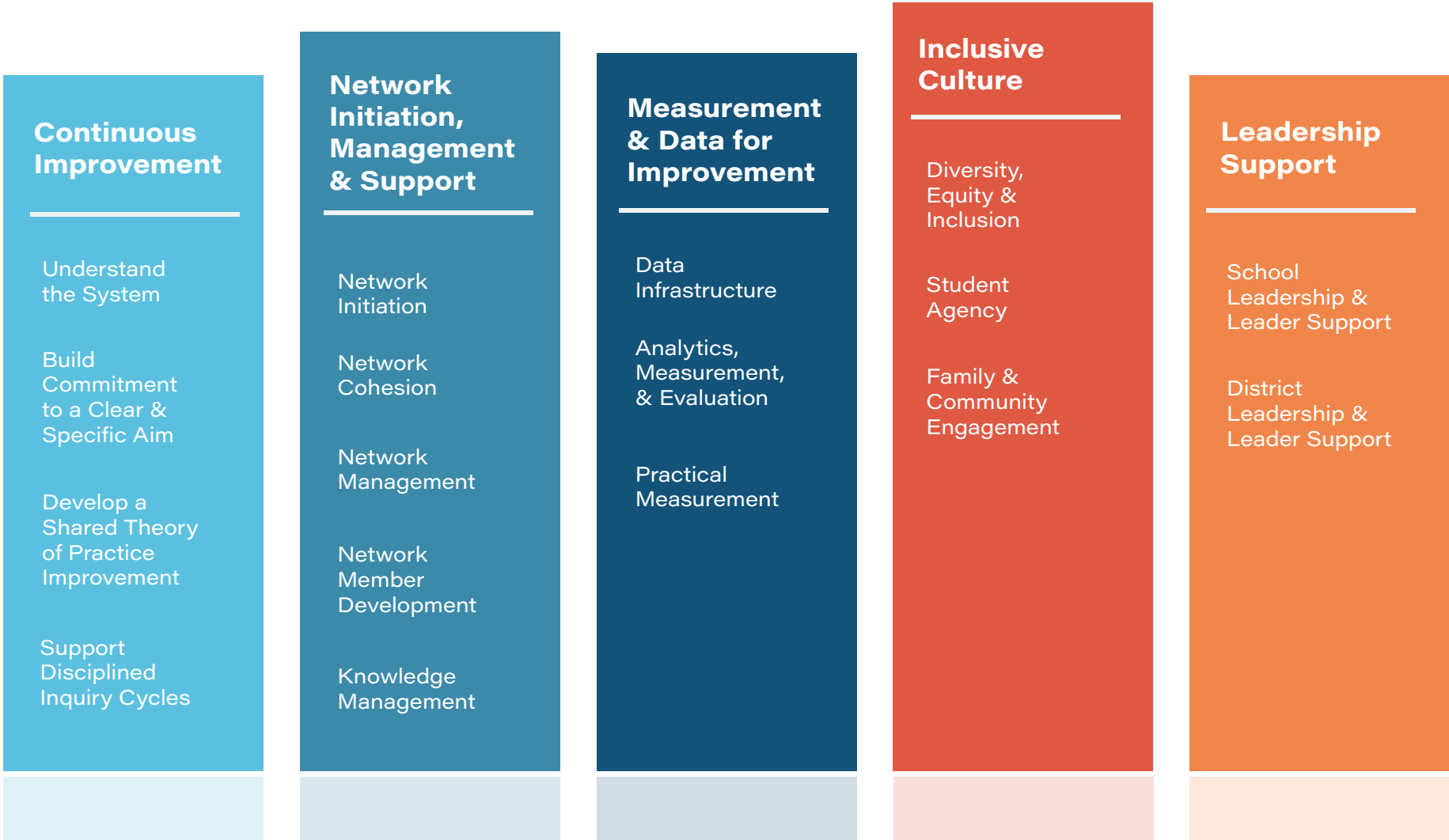


OVERVIEW

Framework for Improvement Teams (FIT)

The **Framework for Improvement Teams (FIT)** is a practical, equity-centered framework to help leaders and educators better understand the capacities that are necessary to successfully adopt networked improvement practices and/or support the work of improvement teams. Organized into five capacity groups, each capacity is accompanied by a list of “look-fors” that describe the practices that are exhibited by intermediaries who are highly capable in that capacity area. To learn more about the FIT and reflect on your own capacity, check out the [Learning Lab for School Improvement Teams](#).



CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

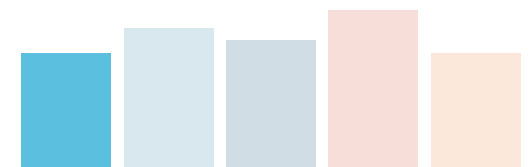
Understand the System

DEFINITION

Ability to use multiple and varied forms of data, structured tools or protocols, and input from those most affected by the system to help improvement teams clearly see the root causes that produce current inequitable outcomes.

LOOK FOR

- We choose from a variety of protocols (e.g., root cause analysis, empathy interviews) to “see the system” depending on our need at the time.
- All of our protocols explicitly center equity in order to meet the needs of the students we serve.
- We bring a wide range of qualitative evidence and quantitative data to the process, incorporating various vantage points and perspectives as well as historical and local contexts.
- We help teams identify the various disparate outcomes produced by the system during their investigations.
- We continuously interrogate our processes to ensure teams see the system from the viewpoint of those most affected by it, and understand the lived experiences of our defined students groups in a way that is culturally-responsive and asset-based.
- We routinely revisit and adjust to information about the needs and contexts of our schools, as well as who needs to be involved in understanding the system.
- Our system-understanding work has resulted in useful insights for the teams with whom we’re working.



CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

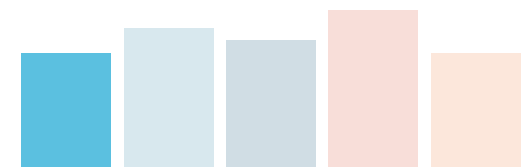
Build Commitment to a Clear & Specific Aim

DEFINITION

Ability to successfully lead teams through a process of developing and committing to a measurable, time-bound, culturally-responsive, and asset-based target of improved outcomes for defined student groups.

LOOK FOR

- We leverage our understanding of the system and analysis of baseline data to develop targets for our defined student groups.
- Our network aim is reasonable, clearly defined, and compelling.
- We use an inclusive process for surfacing and compiling the assets of our target population and local communities to inform the development of the aim.
- We have one or more vetted protocols for co-creating the network aim with school teams.
- Our aim-identification process builds will among network participants.
- We revisit and update the aim as we learn together and/or conditions change.
- Our target-setting work has led to small or large positive changes on student indicators or outcomes.



CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

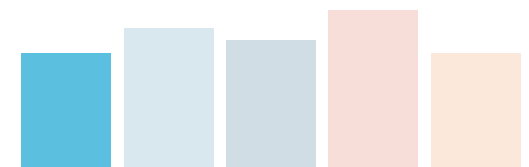
Develop a Shared Theory of Practice Improvement

DEFINITION

Demonstrated strengths in leveraging research, data, and practical knowledge to build, articulate, and iterate on a shared theory of how to reach the defined aim.

LOOK FORS

- We use processes for engaging various types of expertise (e.g. lived experience, research, data & analytics, content knowledge, pedagogy, community engagement) throughout the development and evolution of the theory.
- Our theory clearly articulates the causal relationships between change ideas, drivers, and outcomes, and the evidence base supporting those relationships.
- We support network members to collaborate with students, families, researchers, content experts, and other key stakeholders when developing their theory of improvement.
- We have created a visual representation of the theory of practice improvement that informs the work of the network.
- Our network's theory draws on knowledge of evidence-based practices, high-leverage processes, and local contexts to support our students.
- We developed a set of indicators to assess whether our theory is leading to the aim we seek.
- We revisit and update the theory as we learn together and/or conditions change.



CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

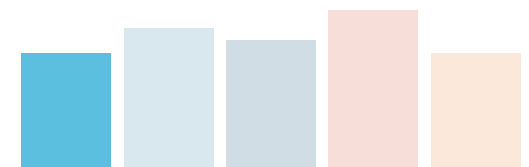
Support Disciplined Inquiry Cycles

DEFINITION

Ability to help teams identify logical and relevant strategies, implement and use feedback and data to test those strategies, reflect, and take action based on what they learned.

LOOK FORS

- We have led school teams through a series of frequent and connected inquiry cycles that, where possible, build off improvement efforts already in progress.
- We provide a set of tools (e.g. PDSA forms, quality rubrics) and processes to assist each school team in developing change ideas, assessing the effectiveness of their inquiry cycles, identifying system barriers (if any), and making measurable progress.
- We have content experts on staff or in our network of close collaborators who can help network members develop evidence-based culturally-relevant pedagogy and practices related to the aim and theory.
- We have improvement coaches with experience running inquiry cycles that include evidence of improvement from their testing.
- Our improvement coaching capacity (team size, time allocation per staff member, supplemental resources) matches the scope of our project.
- We intentionally customize our coaching to each school throughout their inquiry cycles.
- We help school teams build routines to collaborate with students, families, or other key stakeholders in their efforts to figure out where and what to test.
- Our coaches work to build network member ownership through peer-to-peer collaboration to sustain inquiry cycle implementation over time.



NETWORK INITIATION, MANAGEMENT & SUPPORT

Network Initiation

DEFINITION

Ability to identify, recruit, onboard, and set clear expectations, roles, and responsibilities for network members.

LOOK FORS

- We have a clearly defined vetting process to determine the network membership.
- Our recruitment process involves school and district leaders and is designed to result in a diverse network who can bring perspectives aligned to those of our target population.
- We collaborate with school and district leaders to develop and implement an onboarding process for new school teams, and support the schools we work with to develop and implement a similar process for new team members.
- We support school leaders in developing and communicating shared expectations for each individual in the network, and practice an inclusive process of revisiting and revising those expectations.
- We follow a process to co-create network norms with all members and hold one another accountable to the norms.
- The schools and districts we bring together exhibit a similar underlying commitment to the goals we are trying to achieve (e.g., through their time commitment, inclusion in strategic plans).
- We work to align the work of the network with school and district-level priorities. We can clearly articulate the alignment between the network aims and the needs and priorities of each school and district.
- We have a network development framework and plan for each year of the network that guides how we scope and sequence activities during the initiation phase (and beyond).



NETWORK INITIATION, MANAGEMENT & SUPPORT

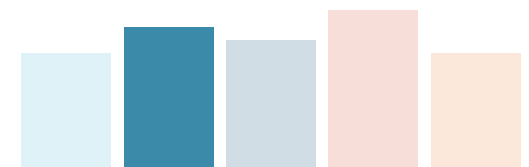
Network Cohesion

DEFINITION

Demonstrated ability to intentionally shape interactions and connections between network members to deepen a community-aligned identity, exchange knowledge through shared learning, and interact regularly around common problems of practice.

LOOK FORS

- We have experience leading collaborative work between individuals and teams who both have and haven't worked together in the past.
- We are skilled in facilitation methods that create a safe and inclusive environment so we can have honest conversations about equity from the outset, and routines to check in with network members to ensure this culture is sustained over time.
- We follow a process for helping network members connect their own personal goals or stories to the goals of the network to build a collective narrative.
- We lead groups through activities to surface biases and power imbalances across team members and/or schools, and reflect on how those factors impact their ability to work together.
- We use structures and practices for fostering connections within and across school teams that persist independent of our involvement as the intermediary.
- We develop rituals for sharing, learning, and celebrating successes using evidence.
- We have a routine for evaluating, monitoring, and adjusting our network cohesion strategy as connections and relationships develop and change over time.



NETWORK INITIATION, MANAGEMENT & SUPPORT

Network Management

DEFINITION

Experience developing and following an intentional plan of routines and activities with network members, while responding to data and feedback, to ensure the network maintains momentum and stays on track.

LOOK FORS

- We have a project management plan for network activities that allows for responsive conversations and learning but is otherwise established early and adhered to for consistency, predictability, and support.
- We establish an engagement plan with each school that includes helping them identify a team structure that promotes distributed leadership, form improvement routines, and stay on track with their inquiry cycles.
- We provide network members with timely logistical information from which they can easily plan.
- We meet regularly with district leaders to maintain alignment between network activities and district-level efforts and priorities.
- We have a communication strategy to ensure all relevant information is disseminated and up-to-date.
- We have a routine for collecting and analyzing feedback from network members about their network experience and the health of the network, including interactions with the intermediary and potential power dynamics.



NETWORK INITIATION, MANAGEMENT & SUPPORT

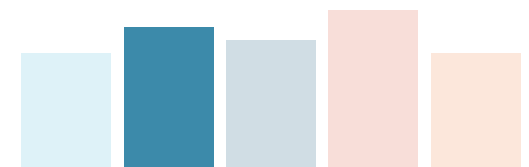
Network Member Development

DEFINITION

Ability to design and execute inclusive and engaging in-person or virtual gatherings of network members focused on accelerating participants' knowledge, skills, learning, and connection.

LOOK FORS

- We know best practices for adult learning and apply them to achieve a set of outcomes with groups of adults.
- We have a capability-building plan that informs how we design gatherings and differentiate to each set of participants.
- We routinely identify content knowledge or skill gaps and potential biases in the network and intentionally bring in partners to build network member skills in these areas.
- We design and facilitate our network gatherings to ensure equitable participation.
- We have routines for self- and collective-reflection that deepen the learning, relationships, and functioning of our network teams.
- We have a routine for collecting and analyzing feedback and evidence from network gatherings and making improvements based upon the results.
- Our work building individuals' and/or teams' improvement knowledge leads to tangible mindset shifts (e.g. from avoiding challenges to embracing them, from ignoring feedback to seeking and learning from it) among participants.



NETWORK INITIATION, MANAGEMENT & SUPPORT

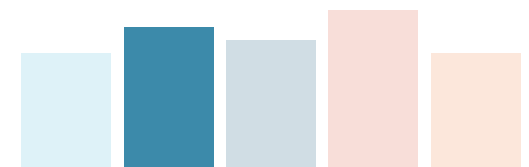
Knowledge Management

DEFINITION

Experience developing and managing routines to surface lessons from research and practice, consolidate or adapt where necessary, and make readily available to network members on a shared platform to accelerate learning.

LOOK FORS

- We have refined processes and/or protocols for sharing lessons, building knowledge, codifying practices, and sharing knowledge across our network.
- We have allocated personnel to managing and maintaining the cohesion and usability of our knowledge management system.
- We have an onboarding process for how to contribute to and use our knowledge management system.
- Our network members habitually use our knowledge management system and report that they have applied knowledge from the system to their practice.



MEASUREMENT & DATA FOR IMPROVEMENT

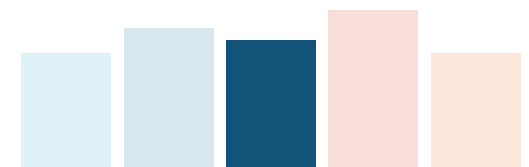
Data Infrastructure

DEFINITION

Ability to reliably and securely collect, connect, manage, and report data from across the network.

LOOK FORS

- We have a data system that allows school-level leaders and teachers to contribute and visualize rapid-cycle and testing data in a timely, accessible and actionable way.
- Our platform is easy for school teams to use and training and support is available when people need help using it.
- We collect data from a variety of sources and platforms (as needed), in partnership with schools and districts.
- We have data sharing agreements and protocols with our schools, districts, and partner organizations (if relevant), including ensuring privacy and security.
- We foster working relationships with personnel in charge of key data infrastructure at schools, districts, and partner organizations (if relevant) to help us obtain timely and accurate data related to the aim and theory.



MEASUREMENT & DATA FOR IMPROVEMENT

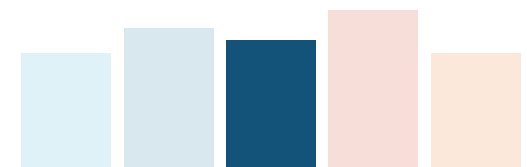
Analytics, Measurement, & Evaluation

DEFINITION

Ability to collect, analyze, and report on data to determine where, whether, and how the network is moving toward the aim, as well as to share and celebrate successes.

LOOK FORs

- We conduct a variety of analyses and develop reports with effective visualizations to communicate progress to schools.
- We disaggregate data by schools, subgroups, and other dimensions to identify variation within a group of schools and/or a group of students.
- We lead the network in discussing important differences between types of data and co-create norms around how we will use data.
- We work with our network to understand how data and evidence can be used in both culturally-responsive ways, and in ways that perpetuate systemic inequities, and we take action to ensure that data does not serve as a driver to uphold inequitable systems and structures.
- We have staff with the skills to conduct analyses to assess whether the actual changes led to improvement in the outcome of interest.
- We can perform ad-hoc data analyses across data from multiple sources to support school teams.
- Our analyses have informed continuous improvement efforts at the local level.
- We can connect the practical measures that teams collect as part of their inquiry cycles to the aim and work of the network.



MEASUREMENT & DATA FOR IMPROVEMENT

Practical Measurement

DEFINITION

Experience successfully helping improvement teams identify, collect, analyze, and discuss the data necessary to understand if and how disciplined inquiry cycles are having intended effects for the population they are designed to reach.

LOOK FOR

- Our network-facing staff demonstrate experience teaching adults how to identify, collect, analyze and discuss data to measure small tests of change in an inquiry cycle.
- We have network-facing staff (e.g. improvement coaches, data specialists) knowledgeable in practical measurement for improvement.
- We provide a set of protocols and tools to help teams collect, analyze and discuss evidence and data with an equity lens.
- We have a shared philosophy and guidance on determining the quality of data grounded in equitable practices and principles.
- We have routines involving students, families, or other key stakeholders in our efforts to understand if and how our change ideas impact students.



INCLUSIVE CULTURE

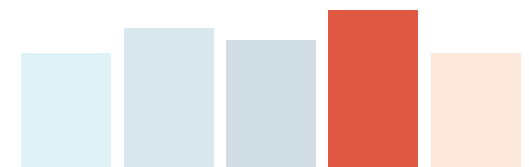
Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

DEFINITION

Ability to create an environment of involvement, respect, connection, and empowerment among team members from a wide range of identities, perspectives, and experiences so they can work across schools to ensure that student access, participation, and outcomes are not correlated with demographic factors.

LOOK FORS

- We have a clear understanding of the state of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) across our organization, and a plan to build on strengths and address gaps.
- We analyze and improve our policies, processes, and practices to ensure that the demographics of stakeholders at every level of our organization are representative of the populations we serve.
- We push for equity in our hiring, promotion, and compensation decisions.
- Team members from diverse backgrounds and identities report that they experience a sense of inclusion and belonging, and feel empowered by our policies and practices around information-sharing and decision-making.
- We analyze and improve our policies, processes, and practices to ensure that access and outcomes are not correlated with demographics.



INCLUSIVE CULTURE

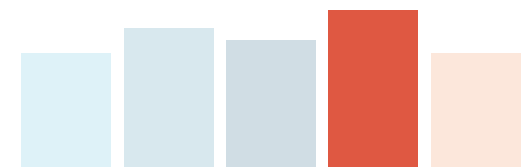
Student Agency

DEFINITION

Ability to support school-based teams to meaningfully include students in the improvement process by creating frequent, supportive, and inclusive opportunities for dialogue, input, reflection, analysis, and co-creation of action steps.

LOOK FORS

- We work alongside our improvement team(s) to elevate student voice and agency as often as we can.
- Students are members of our improvement team and have an active role and voice in our work.
- Our work with schools has resulted in authentic student participation in improvement work.



INCLUSIVE CULTURE

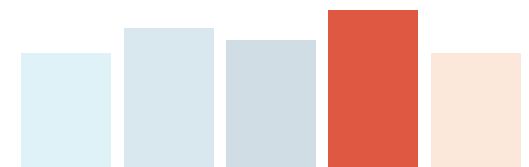
Family & Community Engagement

DEFINITION

Ability to support school and district leaders to meaningfully include families, and the community in the improvement process by creating frequent, supportive, and inclusive opportunities for dialogue, input, reflection, analysis, and co-creation of action steps.

LOOK FOR

- We work alongside our improvement team(s) to elevate the voices of families and community members as often as we can.
- Families and/or community members are members of our improvement team and have an active role and voice in our work.
- Our work with families and communities has resulted in authentic participation in improvement work.



LEADERSHIP SUPPORT

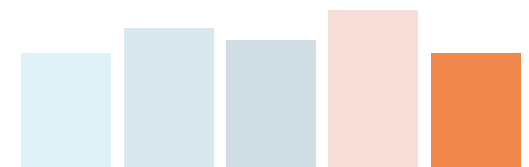
School Leadership & Leader Support

DEFINITION

Experience supporting school leaders to exhibit consistent, supportive, and inclusive leadership in schools to build a healthy culture for staff and students.

LOOK FORS

- We have supported school leaders to demonstrate their commitment to improvement work in their schools (e.g. by reallocating time for each member to engage in adult learning and collaboration toward the aim, personally participating in network activities, building distributed leadership among educators and staff at their school, being willing to test changes to inequitable or oppressive policies and practices).
- We engage school leaders in a periodic progress review and reflection, leveraging a wide variety of data such as network activity data, data from improvement cycles, school climate/health data, and student performance.
- We engage school leaders in processes to align values with actions in support of success for students in their defined student population.
- Among our network-facing staff, we have influence with and the respect of school leaders.
- We have a routine for collecting and analyzing feedback from school leaders on our work and debriefing and improving our support to school leaders based on the evidence.



LEADERSHIP SUPPORT

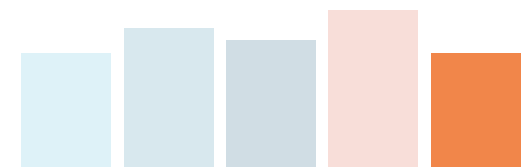
District Leadership & Leader Support

DEFINITION

Experience supporting district leaders to exhibit consistent, strategic, and inclusive leadership across district departments and schools to ensure the work of the NSI remains a top priority.

LOOK FORs

- We have supported district leaders to exhibit their commitment to supporting improvement work in schools (e.g. by reallocating time for school leaders to engage in adult learning and collaboration, supporting school leaders' participation in network activities, being willing to test changes to inequitable or oppressive policies and practices at the system level).
- We engage district leaders in a periodic progress review and reflection, leveraging a wide variety of data such as network activity data, data from improvement cycles, school system health assessments, and student performance.
- We engage district leaders in processes to align values with actions in support of success for students in their defined student population.
- Among our staff or network of close collaborators, we have influence with and the respect of district leaders.
- We have a routine for collecting and analyzing feedback from district leaders on our work and debriefing and improving our support to district leaders based on the evidence.



Contributors

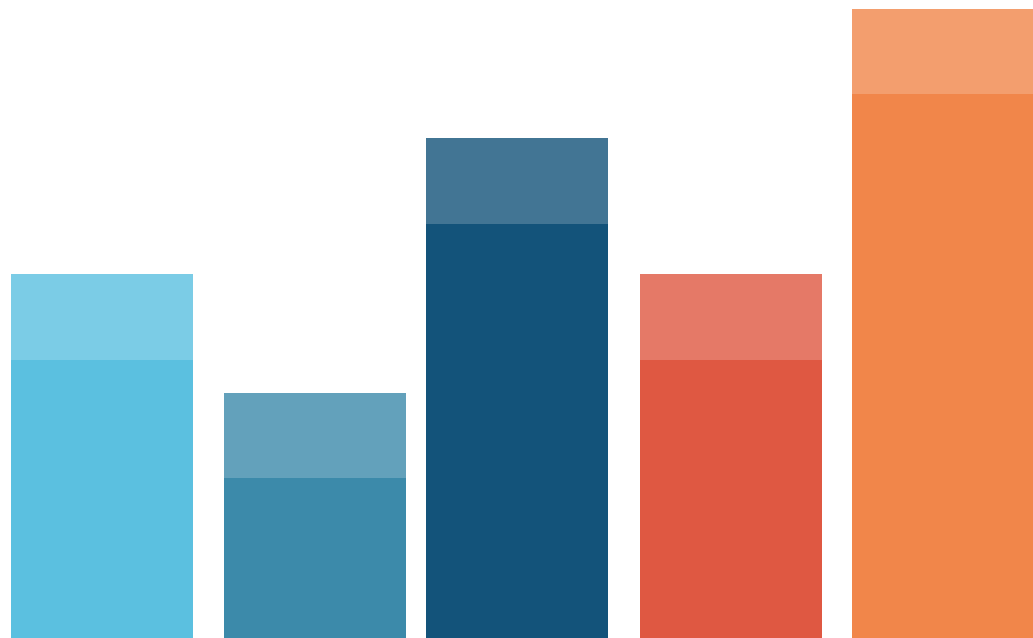
The FIT was developed by Catalyst:Ed, leveraging the collective expertise of the sector, with special appreciation for the following people and teams:

Lead contributor: Ke Wu

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- Shermica Farquhar
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Please see Research Notes (p 20) for links to some of the key research that informed this framework. For a thorough articulation of the methodology and design decisions that were made in the development of this framework, we encourage you to review our paper, "[Measuring and Building Intermediary Capacity](#)."



Research Notes

<p>Continuous Improvement</p>	<p>AIR's IFS Self-Assessment: Motivate and Drive Transformation, Manage Knowledge, Utilize Strategic Approaches to Support and Scale. CPRL's Networks for School Improvement: A Review of the Literature. Kaplan and Norton (1992). The Balanced Scorecard -- Measures that Drive Performance. HBR.</p>
<p>Network Management, Initiation & Support</p>	<p>AIR's IFS Self-Assessment: Cross-Cutting Enablers, Manage Knowledge, Oversee Network Design and Operation, Motivate and Drive Transformation. CPRL's Networks for School Improvement: A Review of the Literature. Russell, et. al. A Framework for the Initiation of Networked Improvement Communities</p>
<p>Measurement & Data for Improvement</p>	<p>CPRL's Networks for School Improvement: A Review of the Literature. AIR's IFS Self-Assessment. Utilize Strategic Approaches to Support and Scale. Yeager, D., Bryk, A. S., Muhich, J., Hausman, H., & Morales, L. (2013). Practical measurement. Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. Stanford, CA.</p>
<p>Inclusive Culture</p>	<p>AIR's IFS Self-Assessment. Cross-Cutting Enablers. Harvard Family Research Project archives (separated from HGSE to become the Global Family Research Project in 2017). Example sources include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Harvard Family Research Project (July 27, 2016). Harvard Family Research Project Resources: Family and Community Engagement in the Transition to Kindergarten ▪ McWilliams, Lorette (June 22, 2016). How to Grow a Framework: Lessons from California. ▪ Rowland, Allison (July 26, 2016). Three Lessons in Developing a Systemic Approach to Family Engagement. ▪ Walsh, Barri (2015). Family Engagement -- Equitable and Everywhere.
<p>Network Member Development</p>	<p>AIR's IFS Self-Assessment, Manage Knowledge, Cross-Cutting Enablers, Oversee Network Design and Operation. CPRL's Networks for School Improvement: A Review of the Literature.</p>

