

Intensive TA Assumes:

1. The work will be done only if there is well-informed agreement about the need, vision for change, and methods to initiate and manage the change process. Intensive TA only makes sense when the recipient and the TA provider have had the opportunity to fully explore the relationship to assure that the task is within the abilities of the Intensive TA provider, the intended strategies and activities are aligned with the recipients' goals, and that there is a good chance that the strategies and activities will help achieve desired outcomes.
2. The goal is to help education systems "make changes that break with the past, operate outside of existing paradigms, and conflict with prevailing values and norms," and conduct TA activities that are "emergent, unbounded, and complex" (see www.centerii.org).
3. The work will be done in conjunction with a variety of people who are proponents, opponents, and interested observers of the intended changes that are envisioned for the education system. Surprises are expected and valued as part of the process.
4. Planning and preparation are always required and always entail working with and through a variety of people inside and outside the particular component of the education system that is the subject of change.
5. The use of any innovation is not only a design effort but an organization and system re-design effort from the beginning, involving changes in policies, practices, and system functioning.
6. System capacity purposefully must be developed to reach a significant proportion of those who can benefit (e.g., at least 60% of all intended beneficiaries; students, teachers, building administrators, parents) in order to achieve academically and socially significant benefits to students and society.
7. Comprehensive assistance will be provided for an extended period of time (e.g., 2–5 years) to help bring about change

and install and stabilize the new ways of work as standard practice in education organizations and systems.

An Illustration

The current work of the State Implementation and Scaling up of Evidence-based Practices (SISEP) Center funded by the U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs makes use of Intensive TA methods. The goal of this work currently is to help six States develop the capacity to scale-up evidence-based practices. Basic TA within SISEP has included publication of a meta-analysis of successful demonstrations of large-scale implementation efforts, a summary of organization features needed to scale-up evidence-based practices in education, the development of an information rich website, and dissemination of tools and strategies that have been recommended to facilitate scaling up efforts. Because the scaling-up of educational innovations is not well documented, requires systemic change, and is a high-risk (e.g. large investment) endeavor, it is an appropriate content area for the use of Intensive TA practices. Barely a year into the process, the SISEP organization for Intensive TA has focused on the following:

Clarity: A seven-month process was used to facilitate state decision-making about the current "fit" of the initiative with the goals of States. Communications and on-site visits during this time provided opportunities for SISEP and the States to assess current efforts and establish mutually informed agreements to move into capacity building.

Frequency: To carry out Intensive TA, one or two SISEP staff members visit each State each month for meetings with the State Management Team and with leadership and stakeholder groups. Between visit communication and activities help to maintain focus and activities.

Intensity: Key individuals participating in the capacity development process are mutually selected by the State and SISEP, and trained, coached, and evaluated by SISEP and the State to establish key linkages between policy and

practice and between implementation infrastructures, schools, and teachers.

Duration: Over a four-year period, SISEP staff work simultaneously at policy, practice, organization, system, and political levels.

Integrity: The goal is to establish expectations, skills, infrastructure, organizational and system alignment, roles, and functions to create effective and sustainable methods to achieve important education goals. Integrating education system initiatives, integrating current (multiple) implementation efforts, systematizing initiatives (less person-dependent), and improving overall effectiveness and efficiency are side benefits of SISEP's work to help States scale up evidence-based practices.

Accountability: State leadership teams are provided with fidelity measures to assess (a) SISEP activities and outcomes each month, (b) implementation of evidence-based practices at the school level, (c) implementation of support systems at the district level, and (d) implementation of policy and quality improvement systems at the state level. These measures are used within a progress monitoring framework to hold SISEP accountable. In addition, they provide information on the extent to which Intensive TA efforts are producing change in the breadth, quality and efficiency with which evidence-based practices are being implemented. The use of these quality practices is then evaluated in terms of functional educational outcomes for children.

Conclusion

In this time of high-stakes testing, declining resources, and rising expectations, Intensive TA is needed to help States make more comprehensive and meaningful changes in education practices and education systems to support those practices. The definition, dimensions, and assumptions underlying effective Intensive TA have only recently been revealed in a growing literature across education and human services. Armed with this bank of new knowledge, skills, and abilities, Intensive TA Centers can more reliably help States create their capacity for academically and socially significant improvements in education statewide. ●



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