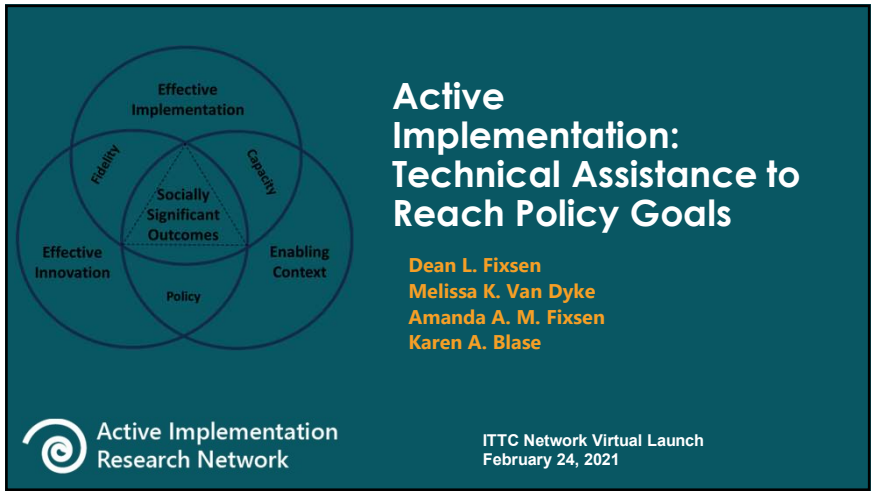

Active Implementation: Technical Assistance to Reach Policy Goals

Dean L. Fixsen
Melissa K. Van Dyke
Amanda A. M. Fixsen
Karen A. Blase

Active Implementation Research Network

ITTC Network Virtual Launch
February 24, 2021

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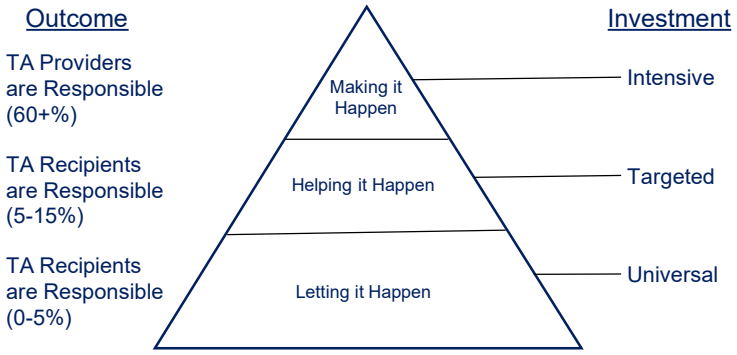


Active Implementation Research Network https://nirn.fpg.unc.edu/resources/scaling-brief-2-intensive-technical-assistance
https://nirn.fpg.unc.edu/resources/implementation-and-scaling-evaluation-report-2013-2017-state-implementation-and-scaling

2

Intensive - Change

To change outcomes…Must change behavior (intensive!)

- Practitioners – must use evidence-based program or other innovation with every recipient every day
- Organization – must proactively support practitioners' use of the innovation; every practitioner, every day
- System – must proactively support organizations' use of the innovation; every organization, every day

Good intentions and verbal support are necessary but not sufficient

3

Intensive - Challenges

- Planned interventions are vague/fuzzy/poorly defined
  - Difficult to do "it" well if we don't know what "it" is or how to assess "it"
- Lack of existing implementation capacity
  - Innovations not "plug and play;" require new roles, functions, structures that focus on supporting the use of innovations in organizations and systems
- Innovations are interaction-based (not atom-based)
  - Providers and recipients impact one another; mutual influence
- Must continue system-as-is while creating a new system to support using innovations and implementation methods
  - The zone of complexity; less certainty and less agreement; wicked problems

Rittel & Webber (1973); Nord & Tucker (1987); Stacey (1996); Nutt (2002); Barber & Fullan (2005); Fixsen, Blase, & Fixsen (2017)

4

Change & Challenges

(Pro)Active Implementation Frameworks

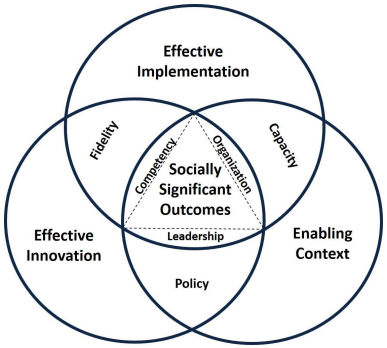
Frameworks provide guidance for purposeful and effective action in complex human service environments

Fixsen, Blase, & Van Dyke (2019)

Implementation Defined

Implement = Use (www.dictionary.com)

- Implementation Science = The study of factors that influence the full and effective use of innovations in practice (Fixsen, et al., 2005)
  - The goal is not to answer factual questions about what is, but to determine what is required (mission driven)
    - From asking "What can we do with what we have?" to asking "What will it take to do what needs to be done?" (William Foege, 2011)



Active Implementation Frameworks

- ✓ Usable Innovations
- ✓ Implementation Stages
- ✓ Implementation Drivers
- ✓ Implementation Teams
- ✓ Improvement Cycles
- ✓ Systemic Change

Fixsen, D. L., Blase, K. A., & Van Dyke, M. K. (2019). Implementation practice and science (1st ed.). Chapel Hill, NC: Active Implementation Research Network.

Making it Happen

Intensive support for change

- Change how we do TA
- SO THAT organizations can change how they support practitioners
- SO THAT practitioners can change how they provide services
- SO THAT more recipients will benefit more fully

"…the resources needed to perform institutional work are created through the enactment of practice…" (Svensson et al., 2017)

- Get Ready, Get Started, Get Better
- Don't wait – start now and learn by doing – develop your own capacity

Site Selection

- Always select organizations (not individuals)
  - More success at less cost (Romney, Israel, & Zlatevski, 2014)
  - Impact generations of practitioners (Forgatch & DeGarmo, 2011; Tommeraas & Ogden, 2016)
- Intensive is expensive – change is difficult
  - Make it pay off with lasting benefits

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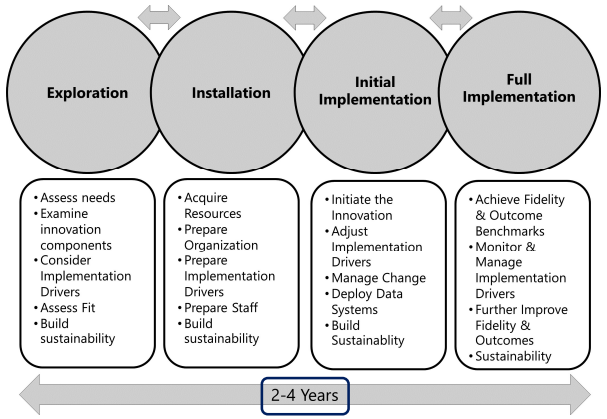
Implementation Stages

Get Ready
Get Started
Get Better



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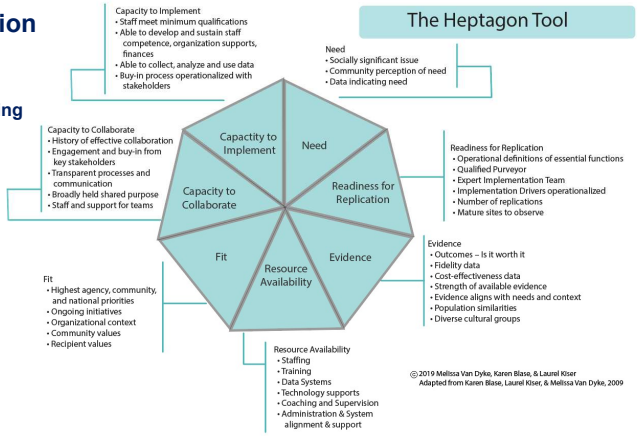
Exploration Stage

Contemplating
Preparing
Deciding



https://www.activeimplementation.org/resources/heptagon-tool/

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Change Behavior

- Teach practitioners to use innovations with good outcomes
  - Groups of practitioners over many years
- Teach organization staff
  - To provide effective Implementation Driver supports
  - To facilitate (not hinder) practitioners using an innovation
  - To collect and use data for decision making and improvement

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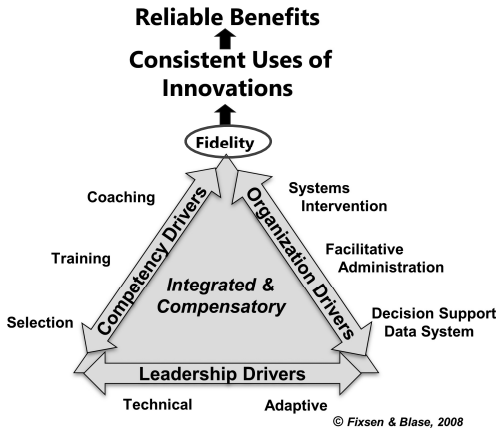
Implementation Drivers

Support for behavior change and sustainable outcomes

By design
Not
By default



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Fidelity and Reliable Outcomes

Adapt to Adopt?

The lesson is, first do it as intended (if you can!)
Then change it to improve outcomes (if you can!)

- Fidelity First
- Achieve Intended Outcomes
- Adapt Only After Repeated High Fidelity Experiences
- Data Discriminate Between Improvement & Mere Change

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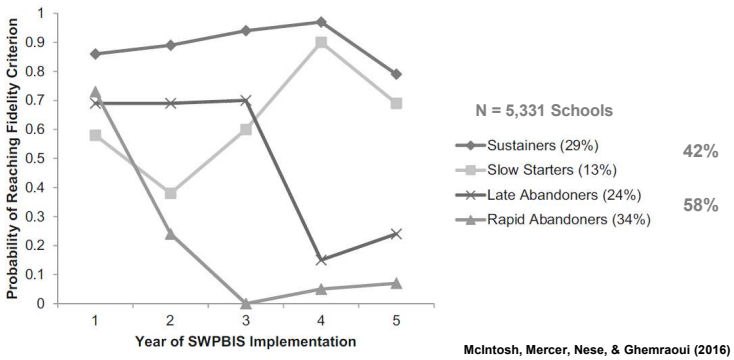
Fidelity and Sustainability

School Wide Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (SWPBIS)



McIntosh, Mercer, Nese, & Ghemraoui (2016)

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Improve

- Sustain and improve innovations, Implementation Drivers, innovation fidelity, and innovation outcomes
  - More consistent (reduce errors and omissions)
  - More effective (improve outcomes for recipients)
  - More efficient (less time consuming; less costly)
  - More usable (teachable, learnable, doable, assessable in practice)

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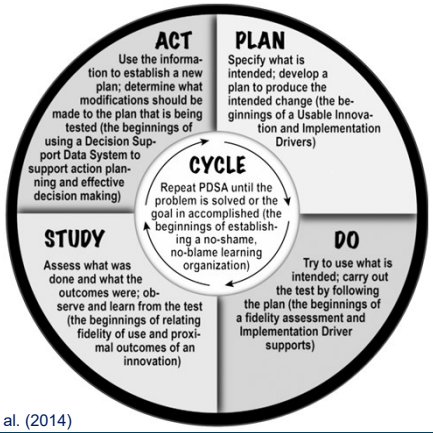
Improvement Cycles

PDSAC

Get Started
Get Better



Shewhart (1931); Deming (1986); Taylor et al. (2014)

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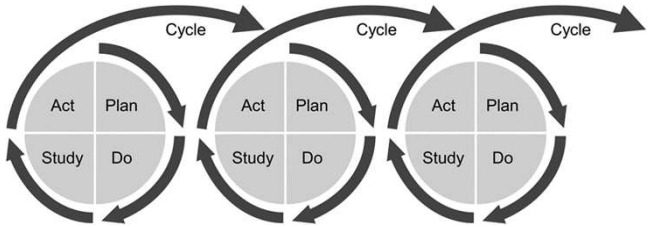
Usability Testing



Nielsen (2000); Genov (2005); Akin et al. (2013)

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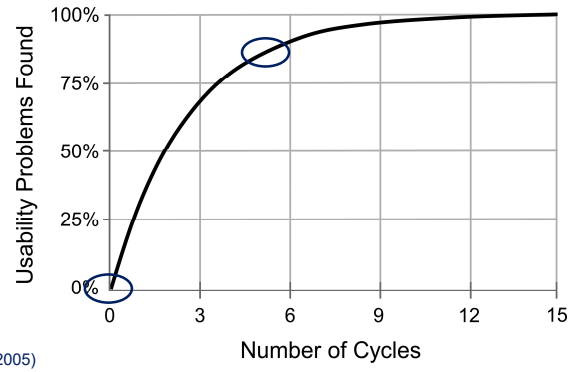
Improvement Cycles

PDSAC

Repeated Attempts

Fidelity as the Standard



Nielsen (2000); Genov (2005)

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Levels of Support

- Intensive support for a selected few organizations
  - Provider is accountable for assuring that recipients access, understand, and use information
    - At least monthly on-site teaching and learning (I do, we do, you do), problem solving, direct involvement
  - Criterion-based improvements in knowledge, skills, and abilities of multiple staff members are the outcomes (implementation fidelity; innovation fidelity)
  - Outcome is documented benefits to the population of interest (60-100%)
- Active Implementation Frameworks provide guidance for purposeful and effective action in complex human service environments
  - Purposeful
  - Proactive
  - Effective
  - Efficient
  - Sustainable
  - Scalable

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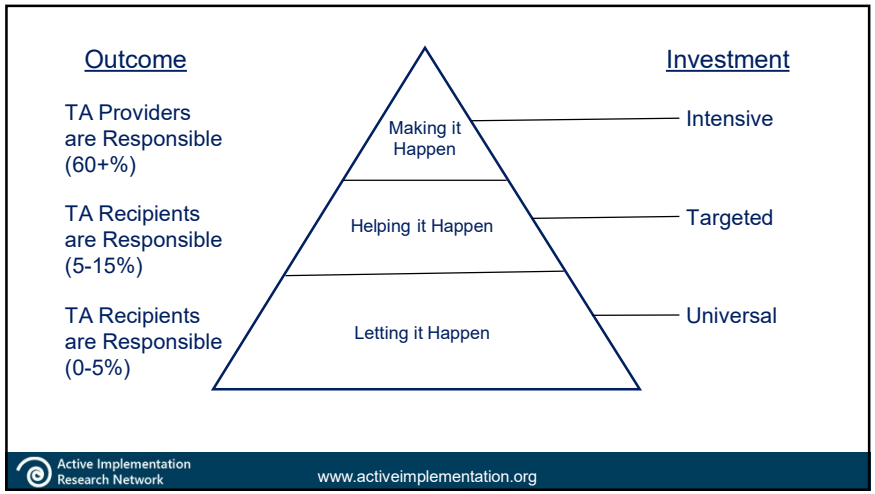

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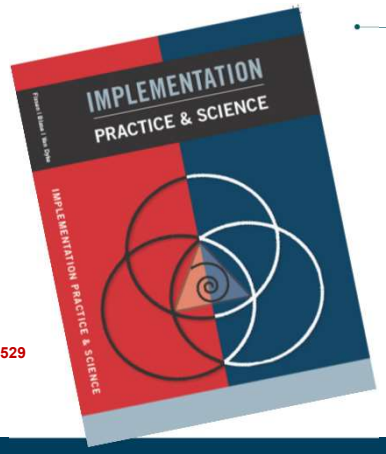
https://www.amazon.com/dp/1072365529



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Download at https://www.activeimplementation.org/resources/implementation-research-a-synthesis-of-the-literature/

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Join the Global Implementation Society

www.globalimplementation.org

The GIS promotes the development and integration of effective implementation, improvement, and scaling practices in human service settings in order to improve outcomes for children, families, individuals, and communities worldwide.

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