Getting Strategic about Systems Alignment
An Improvement Stance to Changing Results

Rorie Fitzpatrick, Director
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Implementation & Improvement Sciences
Working together to produce socially significant outcomes

Commonalities and Complements

1. Use learning networks
   - Network improvement
   - Community implementation teams
   - Use data related to processes, fidelity, context, organizational factors, and stakeholder input to drive problem solving and decision making.

2. Use evidence
   - Both sciences use data related to processes, fidelity, context, and organizational factors, and stakeholder input to drive problem solving and decision making.

3. Focus on evidence
   - Both approaches are system focused. Implementation science is evidence-based and build on what we know that is needed to improve practice. Improvement science focuses on how evidence is used to develop and support capacity to use a practice with fidelity.

4. Start small across varied contexts
   - Both sciences propose starting small with learning from PDSA cycles before scaling using either a Transformation Zone or Improvement Project. Improvement science identifies high leverage problems and related solutions. Alternatively, implementation science uses fit and need of systems, practices, and users.

5. Focus on practitioner level needs
   - Both sciences emphasize use of a systemic selection process. Improvement science identifies high leverage problems and related solutions. Alternatively, implementation science uses fit and need of systems, practices, and users.

Framing it up:
Six Core Principles of Improvement

1. Make the work problem-specific and user-centered
2. Variation in performance is the core problem to address
3. See the system that produces the current outcomes
4. We cannot improve at scale what we cannot measure
5. Anchor practice improvement in disciplined inquiry
6. Accelerate improvements through networked improvements

Bryk, Gomez, Grunow, & LeMahieu (2015) | Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning
https://www.carnegiefoundation.org/our-impact/6-core-principles-improvement/
Digging in:
**Principles of Improvement**

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**Improvement stance:**

1. **Make the work problem-specific and user-centered.**

**SPDG relationship:**
What specific problem(s) is the SPDG trying to solve?

**Systems alignment application:**
What other programs/initiatives/individuals have data or insights to help untangle the complexity of the system?

Who else is worried about this problem, what do they know about it, and how can you help each other?

- Which individuals/programs in the SEA share a commitment to understanding the problem(s) and investigating solutions?
- What about related organizations and other stakeholders?
- Can others' information and your information mutually increase understanding of the problem?
- Can you help guide each other to understand what might be effective solutions to try out?

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The critical issue is not what works, but rather what works for whom and under what set of conditions. Why is something working well at one school/district but not working at others?

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Improvement stance:

**3. See the system that produces the current outcomes.**

**Strategic SPDG Alignment**

- **SPDG relationship:** What conditions exist that impact the results at each SPDG site?
- **Alignment application:** What is your process for understanding how the SPDG and related state and local initiatives are being planned, implemented, and monitored?

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**4. We cannot improve at scale what we cannot measure.**

**Strategic SPDG Alignment**

- **SPDG relationship:** Are performance measures sufficiently informing improvement in SPDG implementation and outcomes?
- **Alignment application:** How can the data that related initiatives are gathering contribute to understanding of how to improve the SPDG (and vice versa)?

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Rorie Fitzpatrick | Director, NCSI @ WestEd

rfitzpa@wested.org | Mobile: 415.205.3155
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Plan-Do-Study-Act Cycle

- Decide what changes need to be made
- Choose focus for next PDSA cycle
- Establish objective
- Draft questions & predictions
- Create plan: who / what / where / when
- Analyze data
- Compare data to predictions
- Carried out the plan
- Document problems & unexpected observations
- Summarize what was learned

Understand multiple dimensions of context. Engage rapid cycles of Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) to learn fast, fail fast, and improve quickly. The fact that failures may occur is not the problem; that we fail to learn from them is.

5. Anchor practice improvement in disciplined inquiry.

System alignment application:

- How is the SPDG designed to learn and expand in the contexts in which improvement is being pursued?
- How are other initiatives informed by institutional context and how are they testing change and expanding as learning occurs?
- Can you inform each other about: The know-how of those being asked to change? Organizational capacity for change? The willingness and engagement of those in the change process?
- Is there value in collaborating on improvement theories and testing change ideas through collaboratively implemented cycles of improvement (PDSAs)? Why/why not?

6. Accelerate improvements through networked communities

Embrace the wisdom of crowds. We can accomplish more together than even the best of us can accomplish alone.

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6. Accelerate improvements through networked communities.

SPDG relationship:
Is the SPDG systemically pooling individual insights from across sites, in order to grow collective capabilities?

Systems alignment application:
How can the SPDG partner with other initiatives to systemically exploit the power of structured networks?

What are the various initiatives with which the SPDG could compare results and promote shared learning?

How can the SPDG provide leadership or partnership that supports the creation of a network hub that enables a structure for gathering and sharing amongst the network, those key insights that emerge as innovations spread, and which can be integrated into new contexts as the SPDG is scaled to new sites?

Thank you!