With the Design in Mind:

High School Reform Model Features that Matter in Implementation

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Chapter citation

Related publications available at www.cpre.org
CPRE Study Background

• Significant investments in school improvement efforts

• Many implementation challenges to realizing program goals

• Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE) received support from IES Grant R308A96003 to study high school instructional improvement efforts from 2004-2007

• Study examined how externally-created school reform programs are introduced, interpreted, and implemented

• CPRE research team focused on four key areas:
  - **Program Design**
  - School Leadership
  - School Social Networks
  - District Office
Study Design

• 5 providers representing common reform efforts in high schools
  ▪ Whole school reforms *(First Things First, High Schools That Work)*
  ▪ Literacy initiatives *(Penn Literacy Network, Ramp-Up to Literacy)*
  ▪ Data-use strategies *(SchoolNet)*

• National sample of 15 high schools
  ▪ Each provider identified 3 promising high schools
  ▪ Focus on early implementation

• Data sources
  ▪ Interviews (493 teacher, administrator, and district staff; 25 provider staff)
  ▪ Surveys of teaching staff
  ▪ Provider documents and materials
CPRE Study Findings

• Variation in implementation and use of program components reported *across* and *within* designs

• Modification of program ideas and strategies in schools and by individuals
CPRE Findings: Program Design

- Components emphasized first and most central to reform were more likely to be implemented.
- Potential for modification increased with complexity posed.
- Engagement increased understanding and implementation of reform ideas and strategies.
- Implementation supports commensurate with needs deepened understanding and use.
Design Factors Framework

Emphasis
- centrality
- sequence

Engagement
- relevance
- alignment
- perceived effectiveness

Complexity
- abstraction
- technical difficulty

Support & Monitoring
- access to provider
- communication
- supplemental supports
Emphasis

- Centrality

  *Central* components are more likely to be implemented

- Sequence

  Components emphasized *first* are more likely to be implemented
**Design**

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Complexity

• Abstraction
  Level of difficulty translating concepts into practice
  *Examples: high expectations, professional community*

• Technical
  Level of technical difficulty implementing and sustaining program components
  *Examples: data management system, block schedule*
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Engagement

- **Relevance to Educator Work**
  Engagement occurs when design directly impacts educator work

- **Alignment**
  Shared understanding of problems and solutions by providers and educators builds engagement

- **Perceived Effectiveness**
  Observed evidence of success deepens engagement
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Support & Monitoring

• Access to Provider Resources
  Access to provider resources to implement and monitor use of the program deepens understanding and use

• Communication
  Ongoing contact with provider staff clarifies design, troubleshoots, and deepens understanding and use

• Supplemental Supports
  Availability of additional supports at time needed strengthens implementation
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Cross-Cutting Themes

• Relationship between design specificity and local program modifications

• Interaction among design components
Framework Implications

• Generate questions about program designs that
  ▪ Guide program selection decisions
  ▪ Guide implementation planning and collaboration

• Generate research to test explanatory and predictive value of the framework