District Initiative and Innovation Alignment Process

Approved by: (insert name, date)

Overview

There are many things districts are working to effectively implement that require ongoing commitment, focus for peoples' time and attention, and resource allocation. Because people's time and district resources are limited, introducing any new initiative or innovation can raise concern by staff who would be expected to implement or lead implementation.

These concerns, while they may be valid, can disrupt buy-in or the quality of implementation for existing areas of focus. For this reason, an alignment process will help districts determine whether new initiatives or innovations will add value to achieving its overarching improvement goals. It will also help district leaders determine if and how space can be made for new ways of work.

Definition of Terms

An **initiative** is a defined effort (e.g., grant participation, county-wide collective focus to improve outcomes for a specific content area or group of students) that requires a sustained commitment of resources (e.g., money, materials, staff, time). Initiatives can either be broadly focused such as an organized way to develop staff knowledge in an MTSS framework or can be more narrowly focused on the Science of Reading.

An **educational innovation** is a program, practice, assessment, or data system used in schools. Innovations become an **Effective Innovation (EI)** when core components are operationally defined and they have been empirically proven to produce desired results.

Guidelines for Use

The alignment process will be used under the following conditions:

- To determine continued use of current initiatives or innovations
- To support decisions around de-selection of current initiatives or innovations that conflict with district priorities, are redundant, or ineffective, in order to make time and space for other priorities
- To support selection of new initiatives or innovations based on a comprehensive review of critical factors, including staff time and district resources

Alignment Process

Initiating an Alignment Process

1. An individual or team identifies the need for alignment based on the guidelines for when the process would be used.
2. A request is made to the District Implementation Team to conduct the alignment process for the identified initiatives or innovations.
3. The DIT determines individuals to include in the alignment process. Consideration is given to DIT members, individuals with proper decision-making authority, and individuals with advanced knowledge of initiatives and content areas in which the initiatives or innovations are focused. Identified individuals are contacted and asked to provide their availability before dates to begin the alignment process are established.
4. Dates are scheduled to conduct the alignment process with identified individuals.

Conducting an Alignment Process

1. Determine the focus area (e.g. behavior, reading) to align.
2. Complete the corresponding table for the selected focus area in the District Initiative and Innovation Inventory. Fill in each row of the table for initiatives and innovations currently being implemented.
3. Once the table is complete, use the information in the table to respond to the alignment questions and determine alignment.
4. When listing the core components or big ideas, consider these guiding questions and example responses:
   - If a school-wide, non-classroom initiative or innovation: What is the School Leadership Team or another school-wide teaming structure expected to produce and do?
   - If a classroom specific initiative or innovation: What are the resources and strategies teachers will use to teach students how to perform the skills that are the area of focus?
   - What assessments and data systems (if applicable) are required to be used for participation?
   - If the innovation is an Effective Innovation, list the defined core components
   - Core Component Examples:
     - **PBIS Behavior Initiative Example**: Adults positively and proactively address student behavior, guidelines are followed for establishing a continuum of responses, data use and analysis expectations that are included as part of the behavior initiative.
     - **Reading Effective Innovation Example**: Primary skills that are the focus of the Effective Innovation; instructional routines / procedures teachers will use to teach students how to perform the skill; assessment data that are required to be collected and used for instructional decisions.
5. Instances where you do not know the answers to alignment questions, seek answers from a person with expert knowledge and experience in use of the initiatives and innovations.
6. Copy and paste the inventory table and alignment questions to use the alignment process for additional focus areas.

Summarizing the Alignment Results

Based on responses to the alignment questions, develop a brief summary of the results. Identify which initiatives or innovations were included in the alignment process, as well as an explanation of how initiatives complement, overlap, or discourage intended use of one another.

Provide a rationale and recommendations for continued use selection or de-selection of initiatives (see District Innovation Review Process).

- If the recommendation is to select or continue use, provide a statement regarding how implementation will be easier on staff and will NOT compete for people's time and attention. Prompt the completion of the District Innovation Review Process.
- If the recommendation is to de-select, consider if the district can make the decision without penalty. If so, prompt the completion of the District Innovation Review Process.

Include recommendations for who the summary should be shared with and in what format. Consider what information needs to be communicated to all staff to support buy-in and provide next steps regarding use of initiatives and innovations.

Decision-making Protocol

Submit completed alignment process and summary to (insert executive leader's name) who has decision-making authority regarding review, selection or de-selection of initiatives. This person may also help determine who to share the summary with and in what format the summary will be shared, based on recommendations provided.

(insert executive leader's name) will confirm receipt of the completed alignment process and summary via email. Included in the email will be next steps that will be taken and an approximate timeline to act on the information.

District Initiative and Innovation Inventory

This tool is used by District Implementation Teams to gather key information about use of current initiatives, priorities, and innovations. Information collected can be used by the district to explore the fit of additional initiatives, priorities and / or resource commitments with current work, to guide decision making to make room for new work, and to assist with alignment of initiatives and innovations.

Date of Inventory:

Focus Area: (list specific area of focus)

Table 1. Complete the fields below for current initiatives and innovations which are requiring staff time, attention and resources.

Name of Initiative / Innovation	Initiative/ Innovation	Initiative/ Innovation	Initiative/ Innovation	Initiative/ Innovation
Scale of Intended Use (e.g., elementary, secondary, Tier 1, Intervention)				
Group of individuals intended to implement the initiative (e.g., School Leadership Team, classroom teachers, special educators)				
Description (e.g. purpose, skills taught, instructional approach)				
Expected Outcome				
Data Used to Measure Outcomes				
Evidence of Outcomes				
Core features or "big ideas" related to the initiative / innovation/ Effective Innovation				
Fidelity Measure				

Name of Initiative / Innovation	Initiative/ Innovation	Initiative/ Innovation	Initiative/ Innovation	Initiative/ Innovation
Professional Learning and Coaching Commitment				
Relation to District Priorities (e.g., District Improvement, Strategic Plan)				
Financial Commitment and Source of Funding (e.g., federal, state, grant, other)				

Alignment Questions

Respond to the questions below to determine alignment of initiatives and/or innovations for the selected focus area.

- Are there initiatives or innovations that address the same target audience for the same purpose or expected outcome? If so, review evidence of outcomes and consider the effectiveness of initiatives / innovations.
- Are there core components or instructional approaches that seem to contradict one another? When used together, are there initiatives or innovations that complement one another and improve effectiveness? How?
- Is there overlap in the staff necessary to support implementation? Will use of multiple initiatives and innovations addressing the same area of focus over-extend staff time and attention?
- What is the impact on staff time to administer and collect data required for initiatives / innovations? Is there data that is collected and used for the same purpose? Are the same staff being leveraged?
- Is there available professional learning and coaching? Will providing the professional learning and coaching supports necessary for successful implementation over-extend resources (e.g. time, staff, funding)?
- Are the same funding sources being used to support other initiatives / innovations or is there braiding of funding? Does the use of initiatives / innovations over-extend financial resources?