Implementing 

Excerpt from Fostering Collaboration Between District and Charter Schools:   
A Toolkit for State and Local Leaders

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**Description:**  
This section draws from the central tenets of implementation science and improvement science, as well as current research on effective collaboration, to describe stages of effective implementation. It contains a tool for reviewing the progress of implementation and a tool for taking action if challenges arise or efforts stall.

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from Fostering Collaboration Between District and Charter Schools

A Toolkit for State and Local Leaders

## D. Implementing

This section draws from the central tenets of implementation science and improvement science, as well as current research on effective collaboration, to describe stages of effective implementation.[[1]](#footnote-1) Implementation is a journey and not a singular event — it is a dynamic process that responds to context and ongoing feedback. The following stages take place after the self-assessment and planning stages.

**Piloting.** The piloting phase of a new initiative is necessary to ensure that full implementation is feasible. Piloting entails implementing the project with a smaller population or on a smaller scale than is ultimately intended. In some instances, the pilot may only consist of a few classrooms or schools, prior to scaling up to a systemwide initiative. Partners are encouraged to “think small” before they “go big.” The initial piloting phase can be a period of challenging emotions as the status quo is confronted and organizational inertia is disrupted. Documenting and reflecting on lessons learned from the piloting stage will help guide the full implementation stage.

**Full Implementation.** Full implementation occurs when the initiative is scaled up and becomes fully integrated into organizational practice. The characteristics of full implementation should be clarified during the pilot phase, to ensure that all parties know what the appropriate expectations for full implementation are (e.g., systemwide vs. targeted implementation).

**Reflection.** Partners can benefit by taking time to reflect periodically on implementation and making the changes or adaptations that are necessary to ensure that desired outcomes are still achievable. It is entirely likely that piloting or full implementation will result in detours or roadblocks that require adaptations. If an approach is not working, partners are encouraged to make adaptations to the initiative as necessary. Each attempt at full implementation lends itself to an opportunity for reflection in order to refine the initiative or to identify where implementation has not been faithful to the original intent.

The Related Tools section below includes an *Assessing Implementation Progress* tool for reviewing the progress of implementation and taking action if challenges arise or efforts stall.

Related Tools for Implementing

ASSESSING IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS

Time for action! Assuming the plan has been carefully crafted, the schedule and roles specified, and responsibilities distributed, implementation of collaborative work can begin. In the daily goings-on of school systems, it is easy to lose track of plans as other issues assume greater priority. To keep the collaborative initiative moving forward, use this checklist to periodically review implementation progress and take action if challenges arise or efforts stall.

The *Assessing Implementation Progress* tool is organized by the three stages of implementation: piloting, full implementation, and reflection. Each phase in the tool includes descriptions of features and activities that are relevant for moving the phase forward in a successful manner.

Partners should work together to complete the tracking during the relevant stages, honestly discuss issues that have arisen, then identify how best to tackle the issues. Maintaining a record of the discussion in each stage is helpful background for reviewing what has worked and what might need to be addressed in future collaborations.

| Desired Qualities of Plan Implementation | Successes/Challenges | Next Steps |
| --- | --- | --- |
| PILOTING (if applicable) |  |  |
| 1. Partners have defined the pilot effort, including scope of activity, timeline, and leadership for the pilot. |  |  |
| 2. Partners have provided information to their staffs and stakeholders about the scope of the pilot. |  |  |
| 3. Partners have secured the resources necessary for the pilot (or adjusted scope as necessary). |  |  |
| 4. Partners have determined success measures or benchmarks for the pilot effort. |  |  |
| 5. Leaders from the traditional and charter schools are forging working relationships. |  |  |
| 6. Partners have taken stock of pilot results, reflecting on the process and outcomes, and have identified adaptations needed to achieve longer-term goals. |  |  |
| 7. Partners have communicated the results of the pilot to their staffs and stakeholders and shared lessons learned. |  |  |
| 8. In light of adaptations and lessons from the pilot, partners have reviewed capacities and resources as needed. |  |  |
| FULL IMPLEMENTATION |  |  |
| 1. The collaboration initiative is led by representatives from all partner organizations. |  |  |
| 2. Leaders from the traditional public schools and charter schools have communicated collaboration objectives and action plans to all staff and stakeholders. |  |  |
| 3. Stakeholders and staff are clear about how and why to participate in the collaboration. |  |  |
| 4. Partners have developed and are employing collaboration norms and protocols. |  |  |
| 5. Partners are able to have authentic and honest dialogue about challenges that arise. |  |  |
| 6. Resources are adequate for initiative activities. |  |  |
| 7. Partners have allotted enough staff time for collaboration. |  |  |
| 8. Leaders from the traditional public schools and charter schools periodically review progress, attainments, changes in the environment that affect implementation, and progress on the timeline. |  |  |
| 9. Leaders provide updates to their staff and stakeholders about progress of the collaborative work. |  |  |
| 10. The majority of intended participants are actively engaged in the collaborative work. |  |  |
| 11. Leaders are monitoring the development of collaborative capacities among staff members. |  |  |
| 12. Most staff have bought into the value of the collaboration. |  |  |
| 13. Staff from partners are developing working relationships. |  |  |
| 14. Partners have implemented data collection about outcomes according to the evaluation plan. |  |  |
| REFLECTION |  |  |
| 1. Partners have taken stock of the results of implementation, reviewed outcomes, and documented lessons learned. |  |  |
| 2. Leaders from partner sites have taken stock of the status of collaborative skills and competencies in their staff. |  |  |
| 3. Leaders have shared the results of the collaborative initiative beyond their organizations. |  |  |
| 4. New champions for collaboration have emerged. |  |  |
| 5. Partners have identified other potential collaborative objectives and purposes based on problems or opportunities. |  |  |

1. These stages have been adapted from Fixsen et al.’s 2005 review of implementation science literature. Fixsen, D. L., Naoom, S. F., Blase, K. A., Friedman, R. M., & Wallace, F. (2005). *Implementation research: A synthesis of the literature*. Tampa, FL: University of South Florida, Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute, The National Implementation Research Network (FMHI Publication #231). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)