



# District Continuous Improvement Framework

DCI in Action  
Second Edition, 2022



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Personnel from the Institute for Human Development (IHD), at Northern Arizona University, provide training, education, and service for people with disabilities and conduct research focusing on improving educational

and disability systems. For over ten years, this team has worked closely with the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Office of Special Education to infuse research into professional development and the statewide system of support. This translation of research into practice occurs through the reciprocal exchange of information, between community members, partner organizations, state agencies, and the IHD. IHD is part of a national network of University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD).

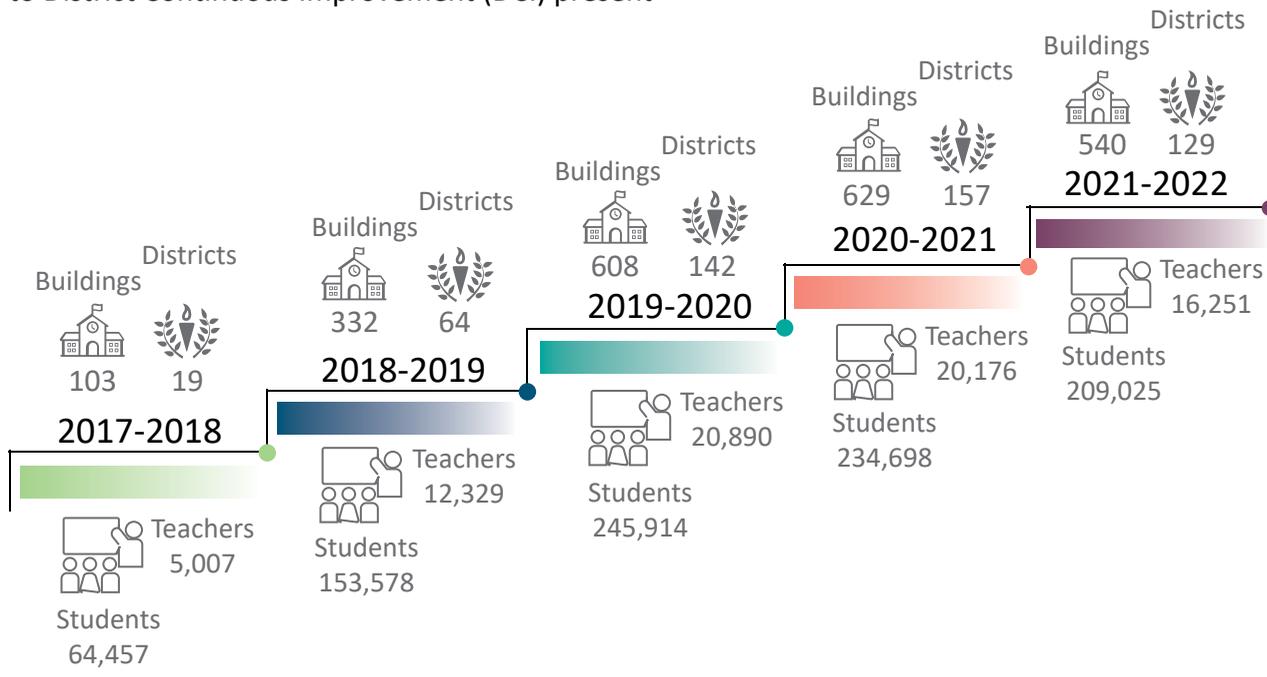
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## About District Continuous Improvement

The partnership between the Missouri Department of Special Education (DESE) and Missouri Educational Systems And Instruction for Learning (MOEdu-SAIL) started during the 2017-2018 school year with Missouri Model Districts. This initial cohort included 19 selected districts with 103 buildings working together to advance and sustain effective educational practices. This statewide project, now known as District Continuous Improvement (DCI), included 129 districts with 540 buildings in the 2021-2022 school year. Figure 1 provides details regarding the project's timeline.

Figure 1. Timeline progression from Missouri Model District (MMD) 2017 to District Continuous Improvement (DCI) present



In DCI, districts are organized into cadres based on Implementation Zone, a data-driven approach to describing DCI processes and outcomes. Implementation Zones provide an increased understanding of the DCI journey. There are five Implementation Zones within DCI: Early, Developing, Initial Implementation, Full Implementation and Initial Sustaining. Once districts reach Initial Sustaining, they are implementing DCI with minimal support or completely independently. In this document we will highlight districts in each of the first four zones.

## About This Product

What does the DCI journey look like in our schools? How does it differ between districts that have been in the project for many years and those who are newer to DCI? DCI in ACTION was designed to provide glimpses of exactly that - the work in action.

The first section of DCI in ACTION highlights districts from differing points in the Implementation Zone across the DCI journey. Following the district highlights are "advice from the field" sections. You will read thoughts from administrators, teachers, and the statewide support team.

Many districts who have been with DCI over several years have reported tremendous success. They often cite DCI as the approach that has been especially effective in contributing to their success.

We hope you enjoy reading the stories and seeing the DCI work in action!



*I believe that this is some of the most important and aligned work I have done in my 28 years in public education.*

*District Leader*



*DCI is the right work, at the right time, for the right reasons. Any district that embraces this work will see improvement.*

*RPDC Director*

## Early Implementation Zone

In the Early Implementation Zone, there is a focus on learning about DCI, including vocabulary, the framework, and tools necessary to implement the DCI work. Districts and CST Consultants begin by establishing a relationship and a clear line of communication. Districts develop a District Leadership Team with the assistance of their CST. The District Leadership Team, together with their CST, determines which DCI Practice(s) will be their initial focus based on their data. Districts then develop an action plan to yield the desired results. As one CST Facilitator noted, one of the most rewarding experiences is seeing the hard work and growth of these districts as they move forward to set the stage for their personal DCI journey.

## Impact Statement

Neelyville R-IV District's DCI journey has made a successful impact on our collaborative teams by moving from a building focus to a district-wide focus. District-wide teams were expanded to include district leadership and the special education department. Neelyville's work with the CST allowed the district to excel through facilitating professional development, classroom walkthroughs, and individualized feedback. This ultimately resulted in implementing teaching techniques that provided the opportunity for students to assess their learning. DCI has been a crucial component to move our district forward in fulfilling the TIGERS mission of Together Inspiring Growth Ensuring Repeated Success.

Heather Black, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Neelyville R-IV

Neelyville R-IV School District, administrators, and teachers have used the DCI Framework to move from a building-based approach to a district-wide approach. DBDM allows teachers and administrators to collaborate and make informed decisions about instruction. The CST and Neelyville staff conduct walkthroughs in every classroom. This relevant and timely feedback is the catalyst for teachers to improve teaching that will lead to effective instruction resulting in a positive impact on student learning.

Lori Ladwig, CST Facilitator (Early East Implementation Zone)



### Neelyville School District

 289 Broadway St., Neelyville, MO 63954

 3 Buildings

 63 Staff

 618 Students

 <https://www.neelyville.k12.mo.us>

# Neelyville School District

FOCUSED FORWARD IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2021-2026



## DCI HISTORY

The Neelyville R-IV School District strives to create environments in which students thrive, and can highlight individual, as well as team success. Neelyville has utilized collaborative teams for many years, but with the implementation of DCI the district has moved from a mostly building-based approach to a true school-wide approach.

Teachers collect data to inform instruction (DBDM), students set goals for achievement (DACL), and teams help implement and propel each other forward.

*"Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much."*

*-Helen Keller*

## DCI STRUCTURE

The Neelyville R-IV School District's team meetings listed below consist of all administrators and certified staff.

- Administrative Leadership Team
  - Monthly
- District Leadership Team
  - Monthly
- Building Leadership Teams
  - Monthly/As Needed
- Grade Level/Department Teams
  - Weekly
- Building-Wide Teams
  - Quarterly

## DBDM

Data-Based Decision Making is used district wide to identify student learning needs through daily observation, progress monitoring, and universal benchmark screening.

The Neelyville R-IV School District focuses on students' day-to-day learning in conjunction with overall achievement to develop relationships with students and promote student and teacher accountability.

## DEVELOPING ASSESSMENT CAPABLE LEARNERS



### TRAINING

Based on the CWIS/SAPP, the district administration chose DACL as the area of focus for 2021-2022. The DACL content training was divided into three smaller parts and presented to the entire staff by the Coaching Support Team on three separate occasions.



### WALKTHROUGH

To monitor the implementation, the CST and the District Administration partner up and conduct a walkthrough in every classroom in the district. Data was collected using a Google Form and shared through a debrief at the end of the day.



### FEEDBACK

After walkthroughs, the teacher, administrator, and consultant had a one-on-one conversation where feedback was provided along with opportunities for teachers to ask questions or respond to the collected data.



### RESULTS

The result of DACL was a district-wide collaboration to showcase strategies that teachers can implement to ensure student self-assessment and continuous growth. Students take charge of their learning while setting their own goals and monitoring their progress as teachers facilitate the process.

**Together Inspiring Growth Ensuring Repeated Success**

## Developing Implementation Zone

As districts move into the Developing Implementation Zone, analysis becomes more actionable because district data can be examined over time. One advantage of this for districts is the ability to begin monitoring the progress of DCI implementation itself. This gives districts the information needed to develop multi-year plans for teacher and administrator professional learning. Districts find that some of the keys to success in this zone include monitoring teacher proficiency in DCI Practices, effective communication plans, setting and monitoring goals throughout the year, data team meetings, and supporting leadership and instructional staff through coaching and feedback for continuous improvement.

## Impact Statement

As a DCI participating district, Confluence Academies has seen the impact of the ongoing work and support of their DCI partners. We have seen improvement in the functioning of our data teams and an increase in knowledge and implementation of DBDM. Teachers can now talk the language of data, know what good data looks like, and have begun having meaningful and impactful conversations around student learning. DCI has impacted teaching in the classroom as well as curriculum and assessment.

Louise Losos, Executive Director of Curriculum and Assessment, Confluence Academies

Confluence Academies' district-wide progress in DBDM is a result of leadership's commitment to supporting the practice. Building to building, leadership scheduling and protecting the dates ensure ongoing and consistent support that leads to student achievement.

Patricia Johnson, CST Facilitator (Developing 1-East Implementation Zone)



### Confluence Academies School District



611 N. 10th Street, St. Louis MO, 63101



6 Buildings



336 Staff



2590 Students



<https://www.confluenceacademy.org/>

# CONFLUENCE ACADEMIES

## DCI Journey

*The network began working with the DCI Facilitator and the Coaching Support Team (CST) in 2018.*

### SCHOOL YEARS 2018-2020

#### CST SUPPORT

- **Fall 2018**

Integrated DCI into the District Leadership Team (DLT), which includes: curriculum director and coordinators, superintendent/CEO, special education director and building principals. Established a network focus — Developing Assessment Capable Learners (DACL) and Data-Based Decision Making (DBDM).

- **December 2018**

Teachers completed a Self-Assessment Practice Profile for DACL. After reviewing the results, CST trained on DACL and DBDM and completed walk-throughs with the DLT.

- **Fall 2019-Spring 2020**

CST continued training and coaching both DLT and staff until the COVID-19 pandemic forced the shut-down.

### SCHOOL YEAR 2020-2021

#### CST SUPPORT

- **Fall 2020**

The district started looking more closely at the goals in the Professional Development (PD) Plan. DBDM became a greater focus due to the pandemic. The network's Board approved an updated Strategic Plan. The network saw the benefit of high-quality PD, coaching, and effective leadership as it increased staff growth, which leads to high student achievement. The network also revisited three questions (see right column).

### SCHOOL YEAR 2021-2022

#### CST SUPPORT

- **Fall 2021**

PD will continue to be delivered in the form of training, coaching, and walkthroughs by the CST members throughout the 2021-22 school year. This will be both virtual and on-site.

## 3 QUESTIONS



### WHERE ARE WE GOING?

The goal is to have teachers implement DACL and DBDM into their classrooms by having students be responsible for their own learning as they set learning targets.

### WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Teachers are working collaboratively and the staff continues to create/update common formative assessments. DACL and DBDM work is in the implementation stage as training, coaching, and walkthroughs continue.

### HOW DO WE CLOSE THE GAP?

Teachers will implement what they learn in training, coaching, and walkthroughs. Building administrators will model DACL language with the teachers, participate in walkthroughs, and support/coach teachers.

All staff will actively participate in PD opportunities provided by the CST. All staff will utilize the Virtual Learning Platform (VLP). Teachers and students will set learning targets.



ASPIRE ACADEMY  
CONFLUENCE PREPARATORY ACADEMY  
GRAND CENTER ARTS ACADEMY  
OLD NORTH ACADEMY  
SOUTH CITY ACADEMY

## Initial Implementation Zone

The Initial Implementation Zone is where the DCI framework truly becomes the way districts do business. When districts enter the Initial Zone, they have a solid background in the DCI Foundational Practices with a deep understanding of DACL and movement toward SBIC. Each district, however, is in a different place within their journey. Districts are able to see the connections between the DCI Practices. For instance, CFAs are written based upon individual learning targets, CFA data is then collected and analyzed through the DBDM process during Collaborative Team time, specific feedback is given, teachers change/improve their instruction, students master learning targets, growth occurs and is celebrated.

## Impact Statement

The Sullivan School District is proud to partner with the District Continuous Improvement (DCI) Initial East Coaching Support Team. As we 'Focus Forward,' our CST meets with our District Leadership Team monthly to train and discuss data indicating areas for growth. The DLT members are growing a solid knowledge base in CT, CFA, DBDM, and DACL profiles.

As staff continues to dive deeper, they learn it is not something else added; it is best instructional practices to grow our students. In turn, students can take more ownership of their learning. With the support of our CST, we can differentiate training and meet buildings and CTs where they are. As we continue to work and evaluate our 'flight plan,' we assure all students will learn, lead, and succeed in the Sullivan School District!

Sullivan District Leadership Team

The partnership we share with the District Leadership Team is grounded in Sullivan's District-led, systemic approach to a collective commitment to their District CSIP Goals. Sullivan's #FlightPlan is designed to continuously "celebrate the great; address the challenges; and implement the changes."

Dr. Terri Parks, DCI Facilitator (Initial Implementation Zone)



### Sullivan School District

 138 Taylor Street, Sullivan MO 63080

 4 Buildings

 194 Staff

 1957 Students

 <https://www.sullivan eagles.org/>



# Sullivan School District

FOCUSED FORWARD IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2021-2026

## FOCUS AREAS

## GOALS

E

EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING

Execute innovative research-based teaching and learning practices to develop & engage students and staff

A

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

Achieve improved student performance through quality instructional programs

G

GROWING PARTNERSHIPS

Grow partnerships through collaborative efforts and open communication to support the mission, vision, and values to support the mission, vision, and values of the district

L

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Leverage a proactive, collaborative approach to managing district growth and improving student achievement

E

EQUITY AND ACCESS

Establish a systematic plan that reflects the diverse community we serve

S

SUPPORTS FOR SUCCESS

Support a comprehensive multi-tiered system that addresses the whole child

## Initial Implementation Zone

Key characteristics of the Initial Implementation Zone include regular DLT meetings that focus on both short- and long-term goals based on their Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (CSIP); internal training and coaching rather than relying on outside support; actively utilizing the VLP to train and grow the knowledge of their new and veteran members; and using data to determine next steps. Districts are making connections between teacher evaluation, professional development, teacher growth, and student growth.

## Impact Statement

Worth County R-III District has seen a positive impact resulting from the DCI process. The concentrated professional development efforts over the last four years have helped build a solid foundation in DACL, assessments, data, collaboration, and more. The feedback we have received from the coaching support teams and the district leadership team has provided opportunities for growth and increased student achievement. This process has been rewarding to our staff and the implementation process was manageable and effective.

Chris Healy, Superintendent, Worth County R-III

The impact DCI has had on Worth County R-III School District over the last four years has been like a seedling growing into a beautiful flower. The DCI seed was planted with an early focus on developing collaborative teams and common formative assessments. It was through these discussions that the flower began to grow, shifting the focus to learning, and the implementation of DACL. The district chose to move slowly to be effective, so students and teachers could become assessment capable learners! A system was developed for the CST to coach and train new teachers. Coaching has led teachers to embrace School-Based Implementation Coaching. DCI work is also a part of their CSIP district plan. Worth Co R-III has bloomed because the district knows DCI is just how they do business.

Debi Korell, CST Facilitator (Initial West Implementation Zone)



### Worth County R-III School District

-  510 E. Avenue, Grant City, MO 64456
-  2 Buildings
-  35 Staff
-  370 Students
-  <https://www.wc.k12.mo.us>

## Worth County R-III

DCI Journey - February 2022

### Our DCI Journey

**2012-2014:** Collaborative Work Grant

**2014-2016:** Collaborative Work Grant Triad PD

**2016-2018:** Collaborative Work Grant

**2018-Present:** Missouri Model District (DCI)



The district began the MMD process in 2017-2018 by reviewing the collaborative teams, formative assessments, and processes that were currently in place. Years two through four consisted of district-wide learning on DACL. The focus began with learning targets and success criteria and developed to descriptive feedback, student self-assessment, and metacognition. This year the district is adding school-based implementation coaching, while continuing to focus on the implementation of DACL.



### DCI Administration Transition

In June 2021, Superintendent, Dr. Matthew Martz retired after eight years in the district. He played an instrumental part in the implementation of DCI. In July 2021, new superintendent, Chris Healy began the new role in the district and continued the implementation of DCI and continued to lead the development of the district staff. The district updated the Comprehensive School Improvement Plan in the spring of 2021 with a focus on DACL, effective teaching, and critical thinking. The district has a leadership team and the Coaching Support Team that meets monthly to plan professional development and to evaluate the progress that the district is making. The DLT and CST provide the insight and support needed to successfully implement DACL across the district. The DLT consists of teachers and administrators from all levels of the district to provide feedback.

"Going through the DACL process correctly took several years, but at the end of our journey, we witness our students taking ownership of their learning. Our teachers' focus is now on learning, instead of solely on teaching. This proves the process has been worth it." - Chuck Borey, Elementary Principal

### 2021-2022 School Year

During the 2021-2022 school year, Worth County R-III has begun implementing School-Based Implementation Coaching. SBIC has provided a non-evaluative process where colleagues can work together to improve instructional practices. The growth in professional relationships and providing the format to give effective feedback has helped the district take the next steps in improving teacher efficacy.

"Sometimes educators can feel overwhelmed with each new professional development training. That's not what we've experienced as a staff at Worth County. In these last four or five years we've been given a solid foundation on which to build. It makes sense and it works. Now with SBIC going into place, we have the opportunity to refine the strategies we've developed from our DACL training. This work has been both edifying and rewarding."

- Julia Wideman, English Teacher

"We all know that students learn best when they are involved and in charge of their own learning. DACL training has really helped me as an instructor acquire tools and strategies for giving students ownership over their own learning processes. Developing Assessment Capable Learners has helped me as instructor understand the importance of taking my learning standards and giving it to the students in a way that they understand what they are learning, why they are learning it, and track their progress on their way to mastery. DACL creates a road map for students to see their strengths and weaknesses, and so that they and their instructor can really hone in on where they need the most instruction, reteaching, and supplementation until they reach their learning goal."

- April Healy, Business/Computers

"DACL has helped improve my students learning in many ways. One way is that they are able to explain their learning in greater detail. The students can tell you what priority standard they are working toward in mastering, along with what daily learning target is helping them master that specific standard. The last way is that students are able to self-assess and reflect on their work. They can tell you what criteria they need to know to be successful with that days lesson. These are all key components in DACL."

- Rachel Runde, 5th Grade Teacher

## Full Implementation Zone

When districts enter the Full Zone, they have the DCI Practices embedded in each school at varying levels of depth, including DACL, Collaborative Teaming, Data-Based Decision Making, and Common Formative Assessment. The District Leadership Team diligently builds vertical and horizontal alignment and also serves as a model of collaboration for the rest of the district. Schools regularly monitor and reflect upon their implementation through the Self-Assessment Practice Profiles. The district works for proficiency across all DCI Practices and regularly engages in walkthroughs to provide evidence of this proficiency. The Full Implementation Zone is truly DCI in Action.

## Impact Statement

The Potosi School District found that in order to have true impact, you must know your staff and be transparent. A student-focused growth mindset must also be first and foremost at all times. For this work to flourish and be relevant, the district must work on having a strong, positive, and supportive culture. Without that culture, the DCI work would just be “another thing” and not have a positive change for student learning. **CULTURE DRIVES EVERYTHING.**

Another lesson we have learned as a result of this work is that building administrators must set high expectations. Teachers and students will follow their lead by setting their own high expectations, leading to increased student achievement.

The Potosi School District will continue to strengthen the SBIC process by moving beyond positive feedback to more of a solution dialogue. Support of new teachers will also continue, focusing on their understanding of the foundations and non-negotiables of DCI work.

The Potosi School District Leadership Team and  
Dr. Carla Williams, CST Facilitator (Full Implementation Zone)



### Potosi R-III School District

 400 North Mine Street Potosi, MO 63664

 4 Buildings

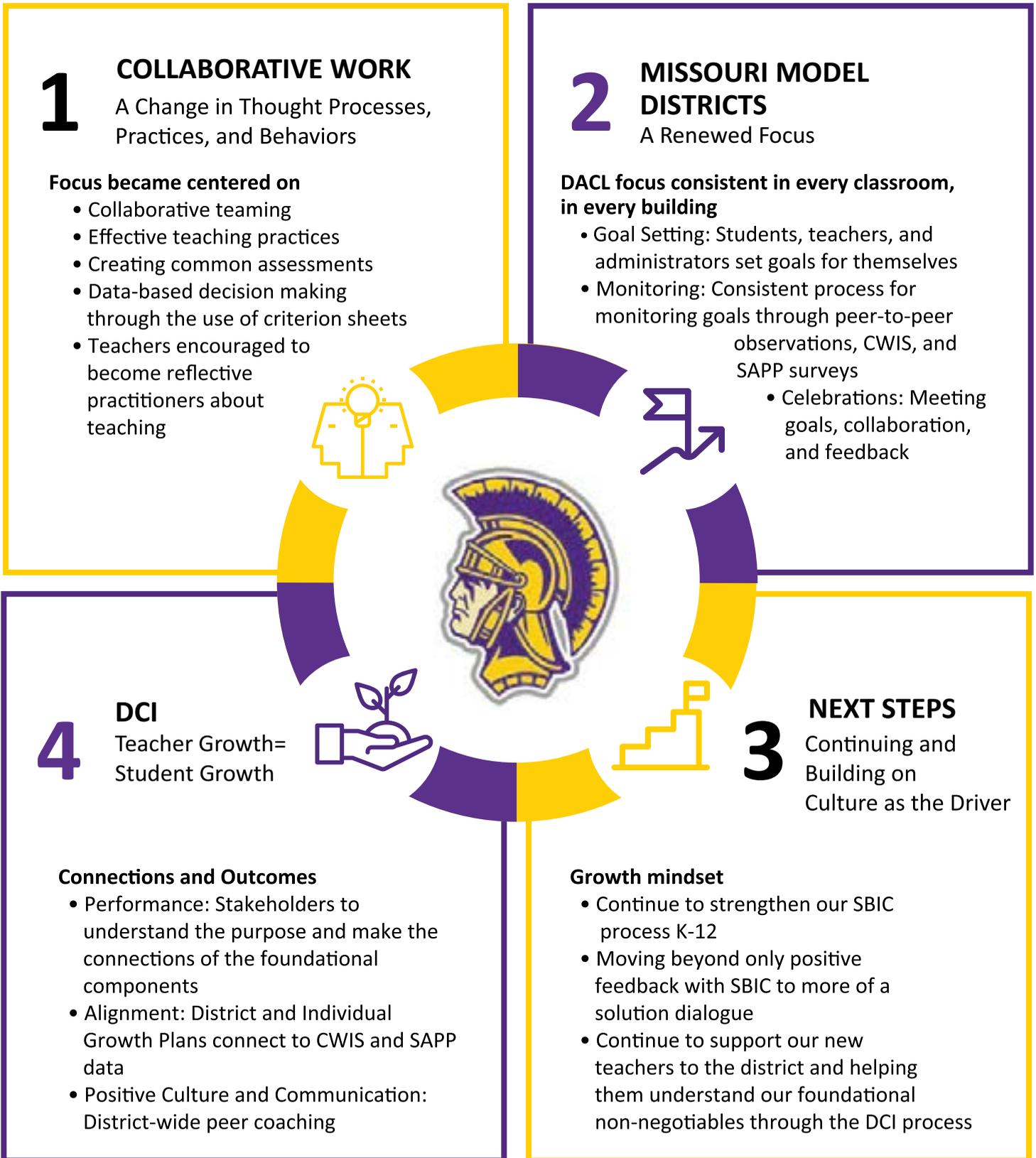
 344 Staff

 2175 Students

 <https://potosir3.org/>

# Potosi R-III Journey

TEACHER FOCUSED TO STUDENT FOCUSED



## Advice from Administrators

Support and participation from district administrators is a key element for successful participation in DCI. As one CST Facilitator noted, *"The true growth in District Continuous Improvement comes from the leadership, not only in each building, but from the district level, too. The leaders are the drivers of full sustainable implementation."*

Below are two thoughtful contributions from long-participating administrators.

### From an Elementary School Principal



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Misty Dale, Elementary School Principal, Oregon-Howell R-III School District

A successful journey requires a strategic plan, a detailed map, and a clear path. The District Continuous Improvement Framework (DCI) has brought those valuable resources to Oregon-Howell R-III School District. The support in implementation and sustainability that our district has received has been amazing. The work being done will ensure that we have the tools needed to implement excellence in teaching practices for assessment capable learners. Since the beginning of this process, we have seen more continuity with goals, best practices, and vision across our district. We look forward to continuing our work with DCI and can't wait to see more successes in this journey!

### Thoughts from a Superintendent



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Dr. Tina Turner, Superintendent, Richland R-IV School District

Richland R-IV began our DCI journey during the beginning of my tenure as an elementary principal. DCI not only supported our district in wrapping everything together from our curriculum, standards, and assessments, but also supported our teachers with needed coaching and supported me as an administrator to define our building priority.

DCI has been instrumental in our vision which in turn has created greater student success. DCI has provided the needed professional development for all staff with the ability to be flexible and meet our needs during the pandemic. This was a valuable resource to our staff which allowed us to support our students.

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Misty Dale has been instrumental in this work since it began in her district.

Dr. Tina Turner has been involved in the project first as an elementary principal and now as superintendent.

## Advice from Districts

### Advice from District Leaders

- PP 

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The focus on systems work and alignment makes so much sense. The work and support is filling my bucket.
- PP 

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With collaboration we can intertwine individual ideas with team goals to empower students to achieve continued success.
- PP 

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DCI promotes teamwork among everyone at the school to ensure our ultimate goal is achieved: the success of our students.
- PP 

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I think it is the perfect time for our district because we are just now in a spot where we have common grade levels/resources/and leadership amongst all three elementary buildings. This is the next step and the coaches do a great job of laying the groundwork to make this an exceptional district.
- PP 

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This process seems to organize best practices in a systematic way, it brings together many portions that we have started and gives us quality feedback on the implementation of those best practices. The DCI Initiative gives us quality professional development to ensure that students benefit from correct implementation of research based practice.

This process seems to organize best practices...

### Advice from District Leadership Teams

- PP 

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Our DLT has learned the importance of regular and consistent monthly meetings. We now understand the value of real collaboration and know that communication is key as we work toward our district goals and focus. The DCI facilitator and CST have been with us from the beginning to ensure we are successful in this work.
- PP 

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The Professional Growth Community serves as our DLT. The form and function is to directly support the district Mission Statement, Vision, and CSIP. Our district honors growth by encouraging excellence in teacher leadership, so having teacher leaders on the district leadership team is essential. The PGC's primary goal is to foster excellence in all district initiatives.

## Advice from Principals

- 
- PP Our high school and the DCI team have worked collaboratively over the past year and a half to develop meaningful and intentional professional development for our staff. Everyday with the help of DCI we are improving step-by-step to develop a culture that closes learning gaps and promotes growth.
- 
- PP Our Middle School teachers appreciate the guidance and support offered through the DCI process... Their personal and professional experiences provide for a grounded approach to improving teaching and learning.
- 
- PP I appreciate the knowledge and experience that the DCI team brings to our school. As we continue to focus on being a school that uses data to drive our decision making, having this team available to give us guidance has been incredible.

## Advice from Teachers

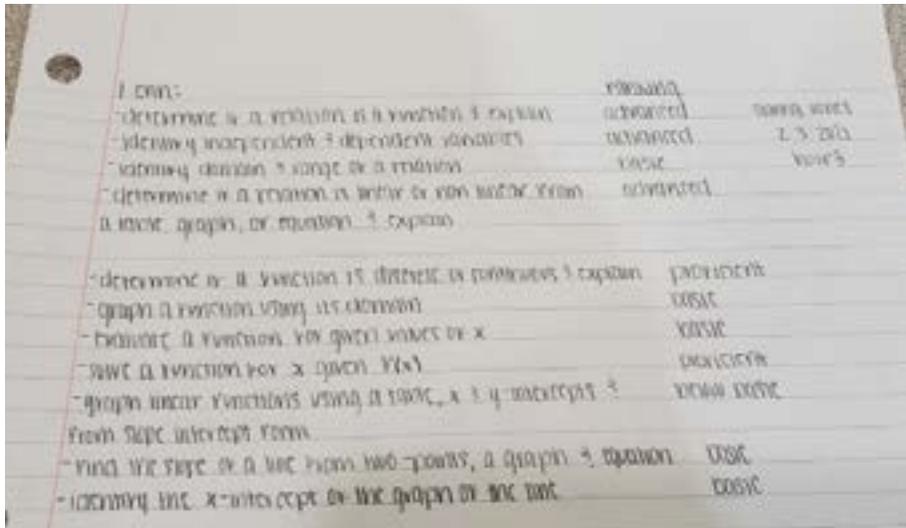
- 
- PP Working with my coaching partner from developing my Growth Plan to completing observations followed up with reflection and feedback has made me more aware of what I am doing in my classroom during instruction that directly influences the learning of my students.
- 
- PP Based on our post observation feedback and reflection, I am getting better at revisiting and reassessing skills with groups of students that require a different approach to the learning.
- 
- PP Based on my DAEL and SBIC trainings, I have started including my students in the creation of rubrics. With input from the students, I have noticed they have more ownership of their work; it has increased their motivation and their understanding of the learning targets.
- 
- PP I think having another teacher come into our room as a coaching partner has been good for our students. We serve as examples of professionals that are still learning, still growing as teachers whether we are new to the profession or have many years in the classroom.

I think having another teacher come into our room...

## Effect on Students



Diamond R-IV School District held a DACL fair in the spring of 2021 which provides a great illustration of how one district demonstrates teacher accountability and effects on student learning. When asking the question "Where am I going" they showed the example (see right) of success criteria where the student makes the story more complete with each version, resulting in a 4-star story. And as students self-assess, their confidence grows with their academic achievement as illustrations show.



## Advice from DCI Statewide Support

A key element of the DCI Framework is the Statewide Support - the people involved in DCI work. DESE provides Statewide Support to participating districts through a partnership with MoEdu-SAIL and Regional Professional Development Centers (RPDCs). DESE staff, MoEdu-SAIL staff, and RPDC Directors and Consultants are at the heart of DCI work.

## Advice from CST Consultants

Training and coaching is provided through Coaching Support Teams (CSTs), comprised of consultants from MoEdu-SAIL and RPDCs. CST Consultants are in the districts, working closely with administrators and educators. They are the "front line" workers of DCI. Some consultants have been with the project since day one while others are newly "retired" educators. Their expertise is invaluable. When asked how the DCI work impacts districts, CST Consultants shared the following thoughts.

Working closely with DCI modules...

## Alignment

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Working closely with DCI modules has provided me the opportunity to deeply explore each one. After you start tweezing them and pulling the information, the beauty of how they all come together and align with one another becomes clear. When reflecting on all modules, I was trying to determine which one was the most powerful for a district to implement. I immediately thought about Developing Assessment Capable Learners. But a district can't just utilize DACL. A district would need School Based Implementation Coaching (SBIC) to meet the highest level of learning of DACL and Metacognition for student clarity. But to have SBIC, you'll need strong leadership which can be provided through Leadership for Effective Implementation of District-Wide Evidence Based Practices. And with the Systems Leadership module, you'll want strong Collaborative Teams (CT) tied in with Collective Teacher Efficacy (CTE) which are then enhanced through the Data Based Decision Making (DBDM) module. While you're looking at your data within teams, you can't ignore crafting Common Formative Assessments (CFAs) which, in turn, leads you right back to DACL and so the cycle begins again. Districts can blend each module together over a period of years within your district and the amount of student growth and teacher clarity is incredible. The work isn't easy, and everyone will have to persevere through it. This work benefits the students of Missouri (our driving light and focus), and the level of growth is amazing.

The close examination of a district level communication plan...

## Communication

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The close examination of a district level communication plan allows for all stakeholders to be aware and share in the decision-making processes across the district. Throughout our work with districts, it has become clear that when a systematic communication plan is in place, developed, and implemented, commitment and buy in from stakeholders increases.

## DCI Practices

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DCI is district-level professional development, grounded in essential learning practices to increase student achievement. The PD provided is relevant to every grade level and content. Through the CST, the PD is tailored and a coaching model begins to support the

## Advice from the Field

learning and ensure the implementation into the daily practice of the teachers.



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I have found working with districts in the early developing zone that are starting with the Instructional Leadership Module refreshing! These districts have been very thoughtful and intentional in their planning and implementation of the DCI work in their districts. They are more concerned about making the work sustainable in their schools rather than looking at it from a compliance issue. DCI is about moving students forward, implementing researched-based effective instructional strategies throughout the entire district. Kindergartners will have the same great instructional practices that the middle school and high school students will receive. It is exciting to see district leadership teams make this commitment to their students by being involved with the Why and How from the very beginning for the DCI work and rolling up their sleeves with the teachers to ensure the work continues.

### DCI Through the Eyes of a New Consultant

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As a retired school administrator who has led a building that was very heavily involved in the DCI process and now working as a DCI consultant/trainer I have the unique view to have lived both sides of the process. As a building administrator the process creates a shift in the way things "have always been done" and focuses on the student learning and developing assessment capable learners and that has an incredible impact not only on their education but your building and culture. In both positions I see the immense value of common formative assessments, making data-based decisions, and developing leadership. Focusing on the right things is crucial in today's schools and this does just that.

### Getting Started

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Successful leaders and leadership teams begin by looking at data to see evidence of effective practices and opportunities for growth. They evaluate the opportunities for growth and prioritize the needs for the district. This creates a vision for the district. This vision is clearly communicated with the rest of the staff and outlined in professional development plan. Effectively monitoring the work that has been outlined is key to success. An effective tool to monitor the work is the Self-Assessment Practice Profile. Leadership teams should communicate the successes and areas of concern.

Successful leaders and leadership teams begin by looking at data...

It starts and ends with alignment...

### Leadership

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- It is quite rewarding when working with District Leadership that is involved, understands, and works with the CST consultants throughout the DCI process. This type of district leadership is seen at trainings, during DLT meetings, and at coaching debrief sessions. For example: After administrators did a DACL walkthrough, they conversed with the CST consultants on areas of strengths and those still needing support. Consultants were then able to gather the necessary materials or review trainings to help support staff members. When district leadership is involved at this level, it is quite evident to see growth in the DCI practices; supporting and encouraging staff members, leading to self-sustainability.
- It starts and ends with alignment within the District Leadership Team. By giving communication roles to DLT members, it ensures monitoring and consistency of message to the buildings. This is critical because DACL should start day one of a district's DCI journey. And while it may take a few years for district-wide DACL implementation to be in place, if the DLT begins the work with a consistent message, then the DCI processes become the foundations of teaching in the district and under gird the construction of district teaching.
- The DCI Leadership module allows the DLT to grow and develop their personal leadership skills. The development of these skills allows leaders to gain a deeper understanding of the DCI framework and to closely examine the routines, procedures, roadblocks, and successes within the entire district to begin developing a plan for productive change. The decision-making process, culture, and climate are closely examined in order to allow for sustainability.
- Starting the DCI work with a focus on leadership and how to build a culture of change in their district/building is a critical first step to moving a district forward. I have found that districts that start here see the big picture from the beginning and know the end in mind. District and building administrators become lead learners and then build the capacity of their teachers.



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My best advice, from experience both as a CST Consultant and a practitioner, is that District and Building Administrators need to PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE stay involved with your teams and their work! What gets monitored gets done! Also, in order for this work to become institutionalized, teacher leaders must be grown and nurtured. Principals and superintendents come and go with much more frequency than teachers. When teacher leaders own the work, the rate of success grows exponentially.

My best advice...

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### Meeting districts "where they are"

After a day of grade level meetings at an elementary school, one CST Consultant shared the following report with her facilitator.



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We had some great conversations about possible next steps and talked at some length about how to strengthen the use of data in the building, as well as to shore up some of the gaps in collaboration. Each group shared some great reflections and thoughts on things that they "used to be good at" but due to CoVID, they had strayed from some of those practices. There is lots of strong commitment to getting back on track for next year. At the end of the day we set plans to work with grade level teams on collecting data, data walls, etc., and as I left the Principal thanked me and said *"This is the most energized I've felt in a long time!"*

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### Value of DCI



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Consistent + Collaborative + Commitment = Systemic + Sustainable + High-Yield Results

DCI is a systemic process for learning about and reflecting on best practices in Missouri schools. DCI consultants provide consistent staff development and coaching emphasizing collaborative analysis of evidence of student learning. Individual educators, teacher teams, and administrators work toward sustaining implementation of best practices, and, overall, districts will see high-yield results because of their commitment to DCI work.

The beliefs, attitudes, and culture of an administrative team are critical...

PP The beliefs, attitudes, and culture of an administrative team are critical as a school moves forward to implement and support effective practices to maximize impact on student growth and learning. We have found the Leadership Modules to be quite essential as a school starts into the process. One district provides a perfect example of a group of administrators working through the leadership modules in order to implement and sustain a systemic framework. This group spent the first half of this year learning together as an administrative team. During the second half of the year, they are beginning to move forward with the core modules with their staff. They have become a more cohesive group of administrators throughout the year.

### Advice from Facilitators

Facilitators act as a conduit between the districts and the CSTs. Facilitators are likely the first contact a district has with DCI. Facilitators match a district with a CST mini-team that supports the district's unique needs. Many of the Facilitators were originally CST Consultants, so they have that understanding of DCI from the ground up. When asked for advice, they replied as follows.

#### DCI Practices & Data

[Districts] all have the same end goal...

PP As a new facilitator I have appreciated the opportunity to see the District Continuous Improvement system implemented across the state and being involved in the planning process so that we can meet districts where they are. Even though districts are in many different places, they all have the same end goal and DCI has all of the components to help them reach that goal.

PP DCI is important work that will truly make a difference in those committed districts as they drive forward to improve. I believe it starts with strong leadership as well as strong Collective Teacher Efficacy. Once the leaders and the teachers feel they can make a difference, the foundational pieces of the work and the effective teaching and learning practices are easier to implement. These practices will then lead to exceptional outcomes for all students.

## Advice from the Field



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As a facilitator of DCI, I have the privilege of supporting and watching the growth of a district. It has been such a valuable experience to witness districts take on the commitment to implement best practices district-wide. Results are evident when district and building leaders as well as teachers and students all collaborate in a shared understanding of support, expectations, and outcomes for the betterment of the school community.

### Systems Support

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The DCI framework, a systems approach, enables districts to stay laser focused on their mission and aligned improvement goals. DCI is comprehensive when it comes to professional development for educators. It provides both evidence-based initial learning opportunities as well as an experienced team to support follow-up coaching designed to meet the specific needs of districts, schools, and individual teachers. As a consultant, I found that the DCI effective practices can be implemented and supported in all districts regardless of their size, demographics, or current level of implementation. Most appealing to the educators I worked with and creating “buy in,” is that DCI is not just “one more thing,” but rather a strategic approach to implement teaching and learning practices having the greatest impact so their students can experience optimum success!

### Leadership

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The district-wide focus of the DCI Framework is often times an opportunity for growth. When a District Leadership Team, including special education representation, come together to consider their impact, it is exciting to watch. The Leadership Professional Learning Modules are great resources for collaboration when beginning this work.



The true growth of DCI comes from the leadership, not only in each building, but from the district level, too. The leaders need to be an active part of the DCI framework, including being an active participant in trainings and coaching. This allows them to be aware, have knowledge of, and know what to expect to see and/or hear within classrooms and during data team meetings. The leaders are the drivers of full sustainable implementation.

The true growth of DCI comes from the leadership...

When our goal begins with...

DCI, since its inception, has been a systems approach to implementing the most effective practices across a district. To take a step and observe a district's journey from forming a District Leadership Team, to starting to build collaborative teams to seeing DACL in action in classrooms, to school-based implementation coaching where the teachers become the drivers of the work is really worthy of awe, astonishment, and praise. It is the school district, and everyone in it including students, that make this work come alive.

When our goal begins with ensuring all staff are proficient in the DCI Practices and supported through leadership, coaching, and collective efficacy, then designing the action steps to achieve the goal becomes our journey.

## Advice from RPDC Directors

RPDC Directors provide support and guidance to the CST Consultants. When asked how the DCI work impacts the state educational system, RPDC Directors shared the following thoughts.

### Commitment

The power of District Continuous Improvement lies in the commitment of all leaders, both district and building, to the underlying principles of DCI: data-based decisions, use of research-based instructional strategies, and the development of a culture of collaboration. If these drivers of school improvement inform every related district and building decision, student learning will improve and the culture and climate within both district and building will strengthen.

DCI assists districts in establishing systems.

### Effective Practices

DCI assists districts in establishing systems. These systems are based on effective practices research. Districts that commit to full implementation establish proven practices that will raise the achievement of all students.

### Leadership

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When considering DCI initiatives that have been effective in our districts, I have observed growth in several areas, but specifically in leadership. Our administrators have grown as educational leaders as they progressed through the leadership module on the VLP. Through facilitation of the tenets of this module, they have become aware of how to build a collaborative culture, gain a broader understanding of DCI initiatives, and understand how CFAs are utilized to positively impact classroom instruction.

### Research Based Practices

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District Continuous Improvement includes research based practices that will move any district toward higher student achievement. When district leaders commit to district-wide implementation of these practices, it will change the culture within the district. Teachers will be empowered to collectively make decisions based on data, and make adjustments to instruction that will best meet the needs of all students. DCI is the right work, at the right time, for the right reasons. Any district that embraces this work will see lasting improvement.

### Systemic Approach

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DCI is a wonderful opportunity for Missouri school districts to embrace a systemic approach to district-wide continuous school improvement. District leaders receive support on how to align district-wide efforts that will directly impact student learning. Leaders gain access to specific data collection and analysis tools to better inform their professional learning plans. Teacher leadership capacity is elevated through leadership training designed specifically for district leadership teams. Classroom teachers are provided training and coaching services in their efforts to embed high leverage instructional practices into their daily instruction. DCI is a statewide collaborative network that works to ensure that all Missouri districts have access to high quality professional learning tools to maximize their overall district performance.

DCI is a wonderful opportunity...

[www.moedu-sail.org](http://www.moedu-sail.org)



Effective teaching and learning for ALL students

District Continuous Improvement (DCI)