DCI in Action
Third Edition, 2023

District Continuous Improvement Framework

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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).

Contents

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 school year with Missouri Model Districts. Now known as DCI, this statewide project included 124 districts with 517 buildings in the 2022-2023 school year. Figure 1 provides details regarding the growth of the project over the years, and the impact on the number of districts, buildings, teachers, and students.

Figure 1. Timeline progression from 2017 to present
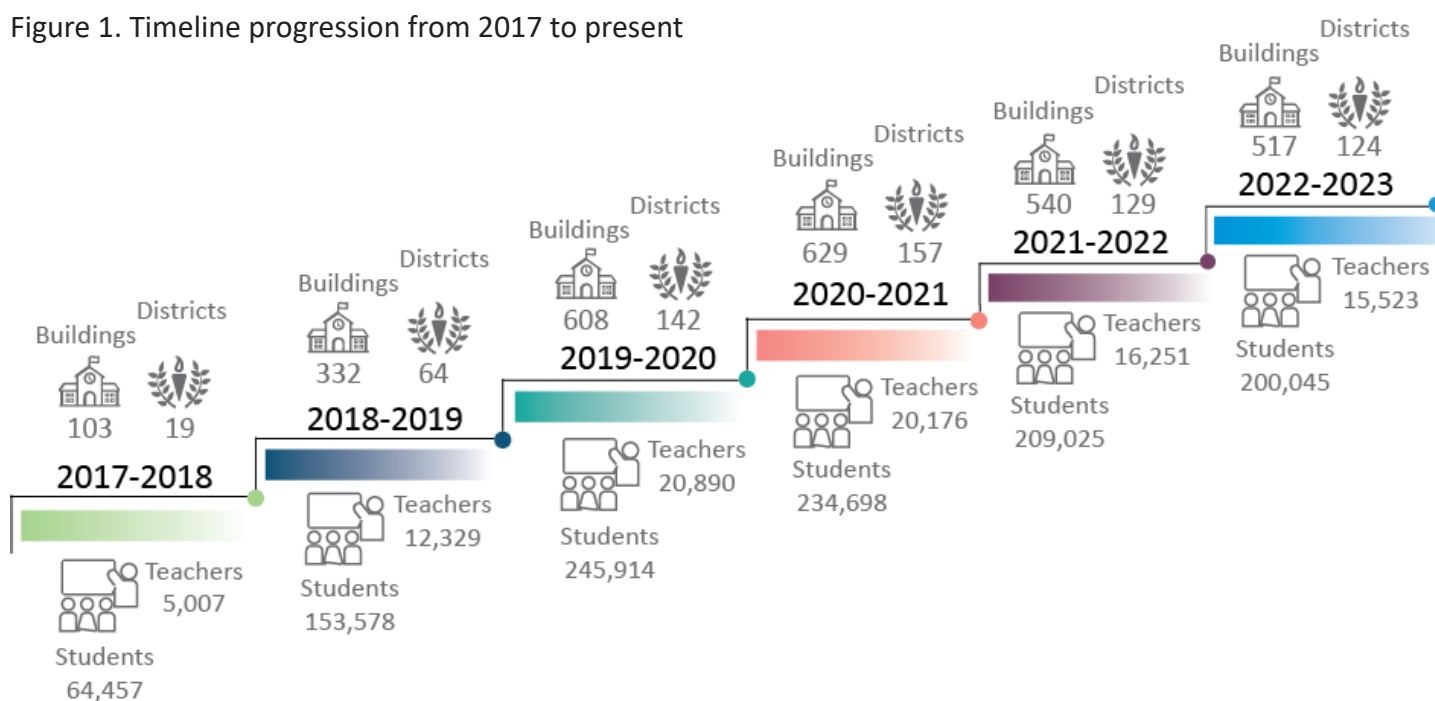
DCI districts are organized into cadres based on Implementation Zone, a data-driven approach to describing DCI processes and outcomes. Implementation Zones provide an increased understanding of the DCI journey. There are five Implementation Zones within DCI: Early, Developing, Initial Implementation, 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!

DCI has been an essential component of the work in our school district. We recognize that the education of our children is too important to leave to chance, so we have been intentional about how we approach the task and how we conduct the important work of meeting the needs of the students entrusted to our care. We have established a culture of trust and respect throughout the district, which has, in turn, assisted us in creating the space in which to engage with the DCI process.

There are no easy answers in the modern educational environment. Rather, every district faces a series of hard choices that determine the outcomes of the students and the future of our communities. The DCI work has made us better at our jobs.

District Superintendent

Early Implementation Zone

In the Early Implementation Zone there is a focus on learning about DCI, including vocabulary, the framework, and the tools necessary to implement DCI. Districts initially establish a relationship and clear line of communication with their DCI Coaching Support Team (CST). 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 Statements

DCI has given our small school district an effective process to analyze the right student data. On top of that, the support we receive from our DCI facilitator and CST is phenomenal. They are on site once a month and are available whenever we need them!

Adam Willard, Superintendent, Walnut Grove School District

The Walnut Grove R-V School District has been very diligent in their DCI work and establishing a hospitable climate and culture district wide. The superintendent realizes his role as an instructional leader and participates in all Professional Development along with the administrators and staff. The leadership team understands the importance of beginning with developing strong Collaborative Teams that are focused around Data-Based Decision Making (DBDM). They realize the importance of going slow in the beginning to ensure that they are doing it the right way.

Jeff Freeland, CST Facilitator (Early West Implementation Zone)

Walnut Grove R-V School District

📍 300 W. College St., Walnut Grove, MO 65770

🏫 2 Buildings

👥 35 Staff

🧍 284 Students

🌐 https://www.wgtigers.com

Walnut Grove

Year 1, Spring 2021 — Spring 2022
Walnut Grove's DCI begins

Working together, the DCI team and Principal introduced and trained the teachers on the Collaborative Teams module.

"We were on the right track with instruction, DCI just helped our teachers get even better and helped our students grow."
Principal Christina Bowers

Next steps were thoughtfully planned including reflecting on CWIS data

Having a clear picture of what DCI looks like for a particular school or district is based upon the needs of that school or district and that is why it is important to review and reflect on CWIS data.

Year 2, Spring 2022 — Spring 2023
Expands DCI initative district-wide

Year 2 in Walnut Grove has DCI continuing to support their elementary building and has now added middle and high schools to become a district-wide initiative. The middle and high schools are receiving professional development with Collaborative Teams.

"When teachers understand the standards they need to teach and how to teach them, they can go deeper with data analysis."
Superintendent Dr. Adam Willard

Walnut Grove Elementary is focusing on Data-Based Decision Making

They have analyzed their data and focused on a SMART goal in the area of reading. Through the Data-Based Decision Making process they are seeing tremendous growth in their students' learning.

"Going through the Data-Based Decision Making process validates the work we have been doing in the classroom. We are doing the right things."
Sonia Wright, first grade teacher

Developing Implementation Zone

As districts move into the Developing Implementation Zone, analysis becomes more actionable because district data can be examined over time, providing the ability to monitor the progress of DCI implementation itself. Districts then have 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 Statements

DCI and the team are an invaluable support for our staff and students. Every building strives to implement and support best practices in order to meet the needs of their students. DCI was able to evaluate our needs within the district and provide the coaching and support needed to make a sustainable impact with staff.

Nathan Manley, Assistant Superintendent, Neosho School District

Neosho is a forward-thinking district with an excellent vision. DCI is able to work with each building to assist in implementing necessary changes to accomplish this vision. DCI is not "one more thing" but instead provides coaching to fulfill the goals of the district. District-wide implementation brings a cohesiveness to the district.

Susan Feeback, CST Facilitator (Developing West Implementation Zone)

Neosho School District

418 Fairground Rd., Neosho, MO 64850-2098

9 Buildings

439 Staff

4870 Students

https://www.neoshosd.org/

NEOSHO SCHOOL DISTRICT

NSD

OUR MISSION

We prepare the youth of our community to be people who are intelligent, driven, and make lives better for those around them.

OUR VISION

Prepare students to be a workforce that will grow the region, and make Neosho School District the district of choice in Southwest Missouri.

2020

In 2020, the district began working with DCI Facilitators and Coaching Support Teams (CST). As part of a Professional Learning Community, Neosho easily transitioned into District Continuous Improvement work.

2020-2021

The DCI work initially focused on Collaborative Teams. Common Formative Assessments and Data-Based Decision Making were introduced to examine student data and adjust instruction to ensure each student achieve their highest potential in learning.

2021-2022

Elementary schools worked with DCI coaches to strengthen Common Formative Assessments and receive coaching through the Data-Based Decision Making GAINS model during team time.

2022-2023

Preschool, Junior High, and High Schools began working with CSTs on Common Formative Assessments and Data-Based Decision Making. District-wide training, coaching, and walkthroughs with CSTs provided continued PD.

Focus Area 1 | Ensure access to rigorous educational opportunities to empower each student to realize their unique potential.

Focus Area 2 | Enhance the culture that makes NSD a leader in recruitment, retention, and development of effective team members.

Focus Area 3 | Cultivate a safe, supportive, and collaborative environment for all.

Focus Area 4 | Provide and maintain safe, first-class facilities and high quality technology resources which meet the needs of Wildcat Nation.

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 Developing Assessment Capable Learners (DACL) and movement toward School-Based Implementation Coaching (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, Common Formative Assessments (CFA) are written based upon individual learning targets. CFA data are 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 Statements

Our DCI journey has been outstanding, and we have experienced significant growth through the process. The fundamental support of DCI has allowed us to transition through some very prodigious educational philosophies including standards-based grading, data-based decision making, and a collective commitment to collaboration

Dr. Joseph Parkhurst, High School Principal, Holden School District

DCI's partnership with Holden School District began five years ago with MMD to the present DCI work. Holden has embraced the DCI Framework as a K-12 systemic approach. This creates continuous growth for both teachers and students in building strong practices of collaboration and Data-Based Decision Making that in turn lead to high functioning data teams. As CSTs, we have observed data team discussions that include in-depth conversations pertaining to standards, formative assessments, success criteria, and best practices. The staff's commitment to each other and to their students, along with their focus on DCI practices, ensures successful support for continuous student achievement.

Grace Milano, CST Facilitator (Initial West Implementation Zone)

Holden R-III School District

📍 1612 South Main Street, Holden, Mo 64040

🏫 3 Buildings

👥 144 Staff

🧍 1206 Students

🌐 https://www.holdenschools.org

Holden R-III School District

Holden School District ensures that teachers are given a place to thrive through collaboration, Data-Based Decision Making, and the use of teacher leaders and peer coaching.

Shawna Gard, 9th Grade English

"As a veteran teacher of 29 years, I have experienced many trends in education; from standards-based grading and block scheduling to cooperative learning strategies and trauma-informed practices. Working in building level Collaborative Teams has undoubtedly been the most helpful in terms of professional growth. Being able to confabulate within the department on common assessments, rubrics, and best practices has encouraged positive change and development in my teaching practices. Collaborating on the Building Leadership Team and grade level team has not only improved staff morale but has enhanced overall teacher-student relationships."

Teacher Leaders

With the focus of consistent improvement and teacher growth we can create opportunities to build teacher leaders across the district as a whole. Teachers have the opportunity to be department or grade level leaders, serving on Building Leadership Teams as part of our commitment to collaboration and building teacher leaders. In addition teachers have consistent opportunities to engage in peer coaching as part of a full district model.

Peer Coaching

With the help of instructional coaches, teachers are given the opportunity to observe one another in order to take instructional strategies back to their own classrooms. Through collaborative work, teachers are regularly able to share best practices and bounce ideas off of one another in a safe setting. Peer coaching is monumental in creating an open culture of sharing, critiquing, and improving.

Data-Based Decision Making

Collective commitments to strong collaboration allow teams to set goals for Data-Based Decision Making. Our teams use our collaborative foundation to focus on how data can drive, change, and improve instruction. Utilizing standards and rubrics for grading, teachers are able to identify individual student deficiencies and change instruction to meet the needs of those students. This allows teachers to apply an RtI approach during their regular classroom time. In addition, teachers use formative data in the same way to identify students who would benefit from enrichment throughout the unit, rather than waiting on a summative assessment at the end.

Collaborative Work

Collaboration is at the forefront of all decision making at Holden R-III Schools. Time for teachers to collaborate is part of the master schedule in order to ensure that teachers are given time to discuss, challenge, and analyze current practices with the intention of improving instruction for students.

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 Teams, 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 Statements

The Poplar Bluff School District is committed to the continuous improvement of our students, teachers, and the system as a whole. Throughout our involvement with DCI, we learned how to focus efforts at the district level in order to provide communication and clear expectations of effective practices for all buildings. We developed strong teams at the distinct and building levels, along with a strong professional development team. These teams created a space for teachers to talk about the work, plan for stages of implementation, as well as collect and receive feedback. Additionally, our teams have opportunities to collaborate with one another or observe classrooms in other buildings. Creating these opportunities has helped us increase accountability and capacity for doing the work.

Patty Robertson, Assistant Superintendent, Poplar Bluff School District

In their years of doing this work, Poplar Bluff has created a culture where the practices and language have become second nature. There is a mentality of "this is what we do here" that permeates across the district. This mentality, as well as needed support, is passed to new teachers entering the district. Their current focus on implementing School-Based Implementation Coaching will only serve to strengthen the culture and lead to continued success.

Seth Ward, DCI Facilitator (Full Zone)

Poplar Bluff

📍 1110 N. Westwood Blvd., Poplar Bluff, MO 63901

🏫 9 Buildings

👥 463 Staff

🧍 5285 Students

🌐 https://potosir3.org/

PROJECT RELAUNCH

5 PHASES OF POPLAR BLUFF AND DCI

Poplar Bluff School District is an example that the DCI work is cyclical. Engaged with the project since 2017, the district has a strong commitment to the DCI practices. Because districts change over time due to personnel changes, sometimes pausing is necessary. This allows a district to refresh, reboot, and relaunch more energized than in the past.

Project Relaunch: Poplar Bluff 2022-2023

Phase 1: Collaborative Work
This phase involved Poplar Bluff elementary schools being part of the Collaborative Work, focusing on building Collaborative Teams developing Common Formative Assessments, and strengthening Data-Based Decision Making.

Phase 2: Missouri Model Districts
As the Collaborative Work transitioned into Missouri Model Districts, Poplar Bluff extended the foundation they had built. A district-wide focus led into Developing Assessment Capable Learners for all students.

Phase 3: District Continuous Improvement
In Phase 3, there was more in-depth professional development aimed at unpacking standards, defining learning targets, and aligning success criteria rubrics to Common Formative Assessments. Teams also developed a digital data system to guide reflective questions.

Phase 4: Pause
Phase 4 led to a pause of the work for nearly two years. During the pandemic, the district realized they needed to focus on teaching and learning differently than before. Additionally, the following year led to uncertainties, turnover, and a laser focus on well-being.

Phase 5: Relaunch
In this phase, the district made the decision to dive back into DCI. Yet, the teaching and administrative force looked differently than in Phase 3. Thus, each school engaged in an Overview of DCI in the fall. Early winter brings trainings on DACL, 30 second feedback, and SBIC for administrators followed by data team coaching in the spring.

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.*"

Thoughts from Superintendents

Dr. Al Voelker, Assistant Superintendent for Academic Services, Raymore-Peculiar School District

Raymore-Peculiar School District is in the initial zone for the DCI work. When we began this work, we already had a great foundation in place. We had strong Collaborative Teams, common goals, and a strategic plan. We have always taken a collective approach in guiding staff and students. DCI aligns perfectly with our current foundation and with our district goals.

> Our administrators are instrumental in the DCI work.

Our administrators are instrumental in the DCI work. It is important that we "row" in the same direction with common goals and outcomes. Our District Leadership Team contains all the district leaders, building leaders, and district directors. We meet monthly and have a communication protocol, so all staff members are aware of the district focus.

I want to stress that district leaders, building leaders, and teacher leaders are all important in this work.

We are a data-driven district, and we use the results from the CWIS and SAPPs. These valuable data help us set our focus, priority targets, and goals which are in our CSIP and building plans. The CWIS and SAPPs help us monitor our progress in our buildings as well as district wide.

Developing Assessment Capable Learners is our district focus because of the powerful research and our own data. The three Essential Functions in the Practice Profile guide our work and our academic

effort. We have results that prove the impact DACL has on student performance. We have designed our own walkthrough tool that is also based on the the Essential Functions. This tool is used by our administrators and teachers to help coach our teachers.

School improvement is very important to us as a district. We incorporate the DCI Framework into our CSIP, building plans, and Strategic Plan. Our Strategic Plan Action Steps include DCI and DACL. All this is shared with the superintendent and the Board of Education on a regular basis which helps in transparency and keeps us accountable.

The DCI Framework provides the High-Quality Professional Development we need as a district. We use the VLP platform for Professional Development (PD), as well as MoEdu-SAIL. We also use our DCI mini-team and facilitators for coaching and on-site training. They do walkthroughs in our district which gives us great feedback. We use the published products to introduce the work to our teachers. The Blueprint and the infographics are valuable to us as we progress through this work because they provide a thorough description of the framework.

When I think about sustainability in this work, I do not see any issues. We are entrenched in DCI and DACL and it is a way of doing district business. We communicate this to our administrators and teachers as an expectation.

I have a few last words of advice. Start with what you already have as you begin this work. Raymore-Peculiar already had a strategic plan in place and DCI established "the why" which helps to achieve this plan. Always focus your attention on instructional efforts and what actually works. DCI provides what works for us and is not something extra. It is not about checking the boxes for compliance. It is a framework that adds relevance to what we are doing in the district. It helps to make our teachers great which leads to school improvement!

> *Focus your attention on instructional efforts and what actually works.*

Dr. Keith White, Superintendent, Diamond School District

Diamond has been involved with the DCI work for five years. I see it as the greatest thing that has happened in quite some time for our district. When we first began the work, the teachers felt that it was going to be just another initiative. They thought we would have a few PD sessions and then move on to something else. This attitude and environment totally changed once we were able to get Collaborative Teams going and develop trust for one another. The support we received from our facilitator and the CST mini-teams was instrumental in the way we communicated the purpose of DCI to our staff. This resulted in a common understanding of our district goals and how those aligned to DCI. Our district took off in 2019-20!

In 2020-21, the District Leadership Team worked hard to build common expectations. Everyone knew what was expected, how it should look, and how it will be evaluated. The DCI Framework has provided all the training and coaching needed for this to happen. I believe District Leadership Teams are very important in the DCI work. Our entire team went through the Instructional Leadership module with the CST mini-team and this assisted us in further "growing" our educators.

I know administrative support and participation are key elements for success in DCI. We started seeing big growth when all administrators began supporting the work, speaking the same language, and having the same expectations throughout the whole district.

The DCI framework has supported our district and our leaders in school improvement. We use data from the CWIS to determine our area of focus. We started with Collaborative Teams and Common Formative Assessment as focus areas. We are now working on DACL and are beginning to see our students take on the ownership of their own learning. Our teachers are conferencing their students on goal setting. We are also focusing on Data-Based Decision Making so our teachers will learn how to take data, talk about data, and then act on it. We continue to use the SAPPs to gauge our progress throughout the process.

> I believe District Leadership Teams are very important for the DCI work...

DCI provides that High-Quality Professional Development we need as a district. With DCI support, we are able to assess our educators and have data to determine what PD they need. The CST mini-teams help design and implement the PD by training, modeling, coaching, and conducting walk-throughs with our teachers and administrators. The communication we have with the facilitator and CSTs is most helpful in attaining our PD goals.
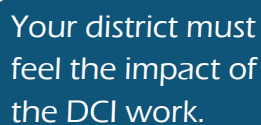
Sustainability of this work is very important us. We are certainly not done with the DCI journey and we look forward to continuing our work. We will have our administrative team continue their own learning as well as support their teachers in their buildings. Turnover is always something to consider and we are thoughtful on how to get new staff "caught up." We do not feel that turnover has affected this work because we are very intentional with new teachers and give them the learning, online support, and tools they need to continue to move forward. We also weave the DCI language into the interview process for teachers and administrators.

My final words of advice are for superintendents and District Leadership Teams. It is important to dig into the nuts and bolts of the DCI Framework. Learn how it will support the teachers and students. Know how it will help your district improve and meet its goals. Finally, do not try to do everything at once. Pick one or two areas of focus and become proficient at those and then move on to another.

Dr. Sam Duncan, Superintendent, New Madrid County R-I School District (NMCR1)

New Madrid is in the Full Implementation Zone with the District Continuous Improvement work. NMCR1 was a two-year Missouri Model District (MMD) school as well as doing Collaborative Work in Matthews Elementary prior to MMD. We were a bit unique in that we had initiated some of the evidenced -based components of MMD with a consultant prior to joining DCI. This helped our administrative team and school board with buy-in.

This type of effort must be with the Board of Education embracing your system for the dynamics of the "steady state" of DCI. Not everyone will want to take the journey, and the Board should be equipped to deal with complaints. Also, some of your current leadership will not make the full journey, so expect a series of starts, restarts, and even some degree of reinvention.

DCI provides the framework, and tremendous support, but education reform must at some point become yours. Simply relying on a template developed outside of your organization will only get you so far. Your district must feel the impact of the DCI concepts and keep working at analyzing and reanalyzing to verify impact, and then do whatever it takes to institutionalize what works.

> Your district must feel the impact of the DCI work.

The District Leadership Team (DLT) is where you start. Where you finish is impacted by several variables, not the least of which is the superintendent's ability to make it make sense to the district, and to stay in the seat long enough to bake it in. We have grown tremendously because we have stayed on task and absorbed the concepts into our evaluation tools. Also, the DLT representatives attend board meetings to report DCI progress monthly. Additionally, either a member of the Coaching Support Team or facilitator attend the monthly DLT meetings, which we feel is very important.

Our Professional Development committee bases PD on our CSIP, which is based upon NMCR1 Core Values. Key DCI concepts are deeply embedded with our CSIP in the form of NMCR1 Drivers for Student and School Success. We have built these concepts into our Principal and Teacher Evaluation tool. We believe we will become what we evaluate.

Since we have been part of DCI for many years, we have worked with several facilitators and consultants who have trained and coached us through the pieces of DCI. We have found each to be valuable to our different buildings. At this point, we especially find it helpful that a representative of the CST attends our monthly DLT meetings.

We must bake "it" into our CSIP to provide sustainability or turnover will affect it. With that in place, we believe we will "snap back" to where we were before turnover.

My advice is to get DCI concepts and thoughts in front of administration and staff and encourage their thoughts and ideas as you move forward in the DCI work. Also frequently keep your Board of Education informed of DCI progress.

Dr. Scott Hayes, Superintendent, Union R-XI School District

Union R-XI is in the early zone for DCI work. We have been involved in the DCI work for at least four years.

Our district began our journey in 2019 by completing the CWIS and analyzing the results with the district's leadership. Those results led the district to form a District Leadership Team with a focus on DCI language and vocabulary.

During the fall of 2020 the DLT met monthly to focus on the Instructional Leadership module as well as the Collaborative Teams (CT) module. During the COVID pandemic we focused on writing the district CSIP to include the DCI Framework representing the DESE pillars.

During the spring of 2021 the district refined our Collaborative Team practices. The DLT continued to align MSIP goals and objectives. Building Leadership Teams (BLTs) were formed, and teams began with monitoring goal setting working closely with the DLT. Currently our district has a focus on Data-Based Decision Making and CTs.

As we move forward with DCI, we continue to monitor progress on CT effectiveness and clarify evidence to support the process. From the beginning, we always made sure the administration and staff were all moving in the same direction. This moving forward will lead to academic excellence of our students.

The Coaching Support Team has been valuable and trained and now coaches our DLT and BLTs frequently. We appreciate the unique skill set each consultant brings to address the different needs in each building.

DCI has become part of our culture. We make sure new staff is adequately trained. We feel like the sustainability of DCI is the

expectation of all administrators and staff. Everything we do goes back to our CSIP and the DCI process we have incorporated into it. We live it every day!

I highly recommend DCI. My advice is to focus on being consistent with vocabulary and language and to make sure all staff and administrators are headed in the same direction with district goals aligned with the DCI framework.

Advice from RPDC Directors

Tammy Ratliff, Director, Northeast RPDC

> DCI has been a great asset to our rural schools...

When evaluating the value of District Continuous Improvement (DCI), every district in the state has the opportunity to receive the same valuable Professional Development. DCI has proven to be a great asset to our rural districts by affording them quality training for all their staff. Whether it is DACL or working with the District or Building Leadership Team, the consultants and facilitator have proven to have a great impact on each district they serve. Missouri students are blessed to have such quality Professional Development that will enhance their progress throughout their education.

John Waters, Director, Education PLUS/St. Louis RPDC

DCI In Action is very visible in the districts that are choosing to implement the best practices in teaching and learning. The beauty of DCI is that a district is met where THEY are and choose an area of support that aligns to their CSIP goals and objectives. This statewide system is calibrated among the consultants in the nine RPDC regions monthly to insure fidelity. DCI is a system that coaches teachers and leaders, not catches them. It is a statewide system that is available to any district/charter in the state of MO. It can create long lasting systems in schools.

❝

Chuck Garner, Director, Agency for Teaching, Leading and Learning RPDC

As I am working with school districts on developing their Continuous School Improvement Plan (CSIP) the DCI work marries perfectly. When districts work on their action steps to meet their objectives, utilizing the DCI processes makes the work come to life.

❝

Amy Ramsdell, Director, Heart of Missouri RPDC

A lot of administrators come into this process wanting to see quick results. They rush into areas that they think they are ready for but the systems piece is not yet in place. I made this mistake myself as the central office administrator bringing DCI into my district. It is important to spend time at the beginning with your District Leadership Team really diving into the leadership module and forming the foundation for the program. This will enable the roll out into the buildings to be consistent and all building administrators will understand DCI and what the goals are within the program. I would also recommend completing a District Action Plan as a DLT and incorporating the program into the CSIP prior to starting with the building-level piece. This will show the administrative support for DCI so when DCI is started at the building-level, there is no question of what those expectations are and what the goals are. So in other words, go slow in the beginning in order to go fast later on. Districts that do not focus on these aspects in the beginning of the process can find themselves having to go back later to do them, or end up without administrator and teacher buy-in.

> *It is important to spend time at the beginning with your District Leadership Team...*

DCI: The Big Picture

It is essential for districts to understand the big picture of DCI as they journey toward school improvement. The following sections contain advice that addresses the value of DCI and how it can lead to growth, the importance of having a system in place along with leadership, and how high-quality Professional Development can have an impact on student learning.

Value of DCI and District Growth

MoEdu-SAIL Team Member

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 partnerships with MoEdu-SAIL and Regional Professional Development Centers (RPDCs). MoEdu-SAIL staff, RPDC Directors, and consultants are at the heart of DCI work.

District Superintendent

We have developed positive relationships with our DCI support team and truly value them and their contributions to help our teams best serve students. Thank you for allowing DCI to support us.

Elementary Principal

We were on the right track with instruction, but DCI just helped our teachers get even better and has helped our students grow. This leads to our school improvement.

High School Principal

Our DCI journey has been outstanding, and we have experienced significant growth throughout the process. The fundamental support of DCI has allowed us to transition through some very prodigious educational philosophies including standards-based grading, data-based decision making, and a collective commitment to collaboration.

District Superintendent

The DCI work is just what we needed to meet the goals in MSIP 6. We incorporate DCI into our CSIP and all Building Plans.

Elementary Principal

Everything we are doing in DCI follows our CSIP and building plan goals, as well as our Vision and Mission.

District Administrator

Our teachers and students have benefited from the DCI work. All the work is research-based which leads to our teachers becoming better instructors. The students are benefiting from this and are actually participating in their learning as they become assessment capable. We are doing what works and it is making a difference in our district's improvement.

CST Member

DCI has given teachers the tools needed to target instruction to not only teach content but to teach students how to learn and grow. Students know how to examine their work and set goals on what they need to learn to achieve those goals.

Systemic Approach and Systems Leadership

DCI Facilitator

> DCI assists districts in establishing systems.

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 achievement of all students.

District Superintendent

It's really important for the DLT team to understand 'the big picture' is what the work involves so that support can be provided.

CST Member

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 have 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 have worked with 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!

CST Facilitator

DCI is a systemic process for learning about and reflecting on best practices for Missouri schools. DCI consultants provide consistent Professional 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, will see high-yield results because of their commitment to DCI work.

DCI is a systemic process for learning about and reflecting on best practices...

CST Facilitator

Key characteristics of the DCI work include regular DLT meetings that focus on both short- and long-term goals based on the district 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 which leads to full implementation of the DCI framework.

CST Member

The beliefs, attitude, and culture of the 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 essential as a school starts this process. One district provides a perfect example of a group of

administrators working through the leadership modules in order to implement a systemic framework. This group spent the first half of the year learning together as an administrative team. During the second half of the year, they began to move forward with the core modules with their staff. They have become a more cohesive group as a result of this work.

DCI Administrator

The DCI work 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. This initiative gives us the tools to ensure that students benefit from correct implementation of research-based practices.

CST Facilitator

> DCI is a statewide collaborative network that works to ensure that all Missouri districts have access to high quality professional learning...

DCI is a wonderful opportunity for Missouri school districts to embrace a systemic approach to district-wide continuous 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 for District Leadership Teams. Classroom teachers are provided training and coaching 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.

High-Quality Professional Development

CST Consultant

The DCI Framework—PD, coaching, support, with tools and resources, provided to districts, instructional leaders, and teachers—has proven to be an effective approach to improving learning outcomes for ALL students in Missouri.

District Administrator

In my experience, being able to partner with DCI and providing staff access to Professional Development in the district has been answered prayer. In addition, the District Continuous Improvement Framework booklets have been superior resources to refer to while building a vision for this improvement focused on student learning.

District Superintendent

It's important to make a plan for the PD needed and consistently focus all of the work toward the goal. We've discovered faster isn't better. We have tried that in the past and it did not get us anywhere. Our DCI team work helped us understand this.

District Superintendent

DCI has allowed our teachers to focus on professional growth. They now understand the standards and how to go deeper with data analysis. When teachers believe they can always improve, the students will learn and grow too.

> DCI has allowed our teachers to focus on professional growth.

High School Teacher

I never thought I would be saying this but I have to share. I have always written learning targets or objectives on the back wall of my classroom and not really paid much attention to them. After training with our CST, I decided to try it the DCI way and now I am recording the learning targets front and center, unpacking them, and coming back to them throughout the lesson. I have been doing this for about three weeks and it has made a huge difference for both my students and myself.

CST Facilitator

As a result of Professional Development and coaching provided by CST members, districts/charters are digging into implementation of DCI practices. I see them now being able to discuss strong and weak learning targets within their teams. They also talk about the importance of unwrapping a standard properly to create strong targets, including the importance of unpacking them.

MoEdu-SAIL Team Member

Training and coaching is provided through Coaching Support Teams, comprised of consultants from MoEdu-SAIL and RPDCs. CST consultants are in 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 "retired" educators. Their expertise is invaluable. I advise districts to take advantage of this resource as they journey through DCI.

CST Member

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 CSTs, the PD is tailored and a coaching model begins to support the learning and ensure the implementation into the daily practice of teachers.

Building Administrator

I like the option of using the Virtual Learning Platform (VLP) as online PD for my teachers. It gives me the opportunity to make PD assignments and collect data. It allows for much flexibility because all tools can be used at any time with an opportunity to collaborate. The CSTs introduce the practice and then follow-up with coaching after the teachers have completed the modules.

I like the option of using the Virtual Learning Platform (VLP)...

Getting Started and Sustaining the DCI Work

Sustainability is important with this work. Effective leadership and having an effective communication protocol is a good place to start. The following is advice on how to achieve and sustain your goals from the beginning of DCI in your district.

Effective Leadership and Communication

CST Member

One of our districts invited other DCI districts to view how their District Leadership Team functions. The focus was on district needs and 'where are we now?' related to implementation. The session started with whole group planning and then each Building Leadership Team separated into their planning teams, supported by CSTs for each site. The invited districts gained a new perspective on how leadership teams could function.

The DCI Leadership modules allow the DLT to grow and develop personal leadership skills.

DLT Member

The DCI leadership modules allow the DLT to grow and develop personal leadership skills. This 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 district to begin developing a plan for productive change. The decision making process, culture, and climate are closely examined and allow for sustainability.

DLT Member

Prior to understanding feedback loops, our leadership team was not monitoring learning in the building like we should have been. We were discussing lots of things other than learning.

CST Member

Starting the DCI work with a focus on leadership on how to build a culture of change in the 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.

CST Member

I have noted that when teachers participate in walkthroughs and communicate what they see to their administrators it helps them improve their own strategies and practices. Leadership at district-level and building-level is essential.

DCI Facilitator

Administrators and staff new to a district often need an overview of DCI. Similarly, as districts focus on continuous improvement, there is a need for ongoing and consistent discussion on planning and building staff capacity through DCI practices.

❝ **CST Member**

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. This leads to sustainability.

❝ **CST Member**

When the district leadership is involved in the DCI work, it is easy to see growth in the practices. Involvement is supporting and encouraging, attending PD and coaching sessions, and participating in walkthroughs. This leads to self-sustainability for the district.

❝ **Elementary Principal**

I have found that I need coaching on DACL as a principal so that I can provide ongoing feedback to my teachers as a leader. Do not hesitate to join in the trainings and coaching sessions as an administrator.

❝ **CST Member**

The importance of administrative leadership and involvement in DCI is key to success. It is crucial that principals participate in walkthroughs and give feedback afterwards. I was with a principal when he participated in a DACL walkthrough in all the elementary classrooms. While some students were able to answer the first DACL questions (Where am I going?), many classes had students who were not able to answer that question. As a result, the principal plans to lead an activity with the teachers to examine their use of CFAs and determine if they are continually increasing in rigor toward the priority standard.

CST Member

Leadership creates opportunities to support and encourage the implementation of DCI. Leaders are the drivers of full sustainability.

> Leaders are the drivers of full sustainability.

DLT Member

DCI starts and ends with alignment within the District Leadership Team. By giving communication roles to the DLT members, it ensures monitoring and consistence of messages to all buildings. This is critical because DACL should start day one of a district's DCI journey. While it may take a few years for district-wide DACL to be in place, if the DLT begins the work with a consistent message, then DCI processes become the foundations of teaching in the district and undergird the construction of district teaching.

Data-Driven Process

DCI is a data driven process. Data elements at all stages can inform sustainability of effective educational practices and influence the design of processes and systems. The following will offer advice on how districts use the Collaborative Work Implementation Survey (CWIS) and Self-Assessment Practice Profiles (SAPPs) to help determine areas of focus and monitor progress.

Collaborative Work Implementation Survey (CWIS)

District Administrator

DCI helped us get started using the Comprehensive Work Implementation Scale (CWIS) to systematically and routinely collect, analyze, and implement change in areas most needed to move towards the best learning environment for our students.

District Administrator

Our district administers the CWIS every spring. Our facilitator and CST team members take the time to review the results with us. It is so helpful to see our teachers' perceptions of where they believe they are. We then will determine our next year's PD based on these results.

High School Principal

Even though our CWIS data show that we are proficient with DACL, we aren't seeing it lived in the classroom. We compare the perceptual data from the CWIS to what is really happening in our district. I think we need more modeling of DACL for teachers.

We use the CWIS to identify strengths and weaknesses...

DLT Member

We use the CWIS to identify strengths and weaknesses pertaining to the DCI practices. Our DLT uses these results to identify district goals. The facilitator and the CSTs work with us to interpret the results.

DLT Member

Our DLT uses the CWIS to help identify the district focus. It is also valuable to look at previous longitudinal results from this tool because it helps us determine growth. The facilitator and CST help us process these results.

Self-Assessment Practice Profiles (SAPPs)

DCI Administrator

We have utilized the SAPP protocols to collect and analyze our data with the direction of DCI support to ensure that we provide a great learning environment for our students.

DLT Member

The SAPPs provide the teachers with a rubric to determine growth just like we use with students. SAPPs help the teachers to be Assessment Capable Learners.

> The SAPPs provide the teachers with a rubric to determine growth...

Building Principal

The SAPPs are great tools to help our district see where our teachers are in regards to our chosen focus. We use this data to differentiate PD for teachers.

District Administrator

Our district uses the SAPPs for a self-check on the implementation of the practices. SAPPs make it easy to track individual progress. It is a powerful tool when it is used along side the Practice Profile as we journey to proficiency.

Selected DCI Practices

Having a thorough understanding of the DCI Practices is vital to successful implementation of DCI. The DCI practices are rooted in effective research and have been found to have a positive impact on student learning. The following advice describes the value of implementing these practices in districts as they move toward school improvement.

Collaborative Teams (CTs)

District Superintendent

DCI has been of great value in reviewing our collaborative process and providing feedback to ensure that we are on the right track.

Seventh Grade Science Teacher

Our teachers and staff collaborate with the focus of student achievement and the whole student. We work together as vertical content teams, Building Leadership Teams, and grade level teams to achieve our goals. With this partnership, we are able to work together to create ideas to increase student achievement and improve best practices.

CST Member

The interwoven layers of the DCI process are truly becoming very evident to me as I work in my first year as a consultant. As I studied the modules in isolation to prepare for the work, I could understand the significance and importance of each one. What I failed to see at first was how they all connected, despite their research-base and the beautiful infographics. It is now no surprise to me when a conversation about a collaborative culture leads to a productive discussion about restructuring building data teams; or

when teachers are engaging in supporting one another and solving problems collaboratively, a greater culture of trust arises; or when a refresh of systems leadership results in the emergence of teacher instructional leaders.

High School Teacher

Our Collaborative Teams have allowed us to have great conversations using data as we set our goals for instruction. Through DCI, we now understand the importance of this planning dialogue as it leads to a common focus based on student improvement. Before DCI, our teams met for the 'sake of meeting' with no agenda or purpose.

> Our collaborative teams have allowed us to have great conversations...

Data-Based Decision Making (DBDM)

Elementary Principal

Building a system for DACL makes sense so that teachers make data-based decisions on the level of learning that meets the grade-level standards. Prior to doing the DCI work, our teachers often weren't teaching grade-level standards.

First Grade Teacher

Going through the Data-Based Decision Making process validates the work we have been doing in the classroom. We are doing the right things.

High School Principal

During out data team meetings, we are not only discussing the data but planning strategies to support students that need skills retaught and to enrich and extend the thinking of students who have mastered the learning targets. Through the Data-Based Decision Making process we are seeing tremendous growth in student learning.

Analyzing data and making data-driven decisions is foundational to the DCI work.

DCI Facilitator

Analyzing data and making data-driven decisions is foundational to the DCI work. The CST members are providing support to district instructional coaches by using the DBDM module and the GAINS process. District coaches are feeling increased confidence when helping teachers make informed decisions.

CST Member

I see more productive data team meetings after training and coaching on DBDM. Teams are now better equipped to analyze data and make informed instructional decisions by using the GAINS process. Teachers are working on ways of identifying where they can differentiate instruction to meet the needs of their individual students.

District Administrator

The DBDM Practice Profile has been of great value in reviewing our DBDM process and providing feedback to ensure that we are on the right track.

Second Grade Teacher

We not only use the DBDM process to identify academic needs but use it to determine social and behavioral needs. We then collaborate on the practices that will make our students successful.

Common Formative Assessments

Reading Specialist

Now that I see how CFAs build toward the grade-level priority standards, it makes sense that this is where interventions should happen.

CST Member

During a recent walkthrough in a district, I observed teachers using both formative and summative data to help students determine their next steps in the learning process.

Curriculum Director

Be sure your teachers are data teaming on CFAs from grade-level standards. In the past, we were not doing this and we were not making gains. Our students' achievement levels are improving as a result of this work.

Using CFAs ensure that there is consistency across grade levels or departments…

High School Teacher

After receiving training and coaching on CFAs, I can see how formative assessment guides and informs instruction during a learning cycle whether it is a lesson, unit, or course. Using CFAs ensure that there is consistency across grade levels or departments for both student and teacher performance.

District Administrator

The CFA Practice Profile was instrumental in helping our teams work through the CFA process to ensure we were achieving appropriate rigor in our assessments.

Effective Teaching and Learning Practices (ETLPs)

District Administrator

DCI has provided substantial support to our school in regard to Developing Assessment Capable Learners by helping teachers to reach new levels of confidence and students to begin making connections with their learning needs.

Second Grade Teacher

The DACL process has shown me how it makes me a better teacher. My students are more motivated as they set goals from their targets. They are working harder at reaching these goals while self-assessing and monitoring their work.

Middle School Teacher

Through the DACL process, I have learned how to give real feedback to my students during the learning process. My feedback is more detailed and descriptive. It is geared to how students can improve and reach their goals/targets. I am able to guide my students toward self-regulation as they assess their work.

> Through the DACL process, I have learned how to give real feedback to my students during the learning process.

Sixth Grade Teacher

It makes sense to me now that the standards are not all equal and creating a learning progression allows teachers to answer the DACL questions so DACL can be lived in the classroom.

CST Facilitator

A kindergarten teacher put the standards in three different colors with each one having a matching car on a poster in the room. The road represents the journey and the color-coded cars represent where they are in the learning progression for that standard. Considering the entire building has planned three interim CFAs, the 1, 2, and 3 on the road represents where they are in that process. The teacher shared that students talk every day about how far away or close they are to the 'finish line.'

CST Facilitator

Working through the Developing Assessment Capable Learners module has helped teachers identify priority standards, along with clear learning targets that match their standards. This has led them to focus on creating success criteria to support learning targets and using those to provide feedback to students.

Fourth Grade Teacher

Building a system for DACL really helped us (teachers) to be able to live the DACL strategies in the classroom and know what data to use for RtI.

Third Grade Teacher

Nothing is more rewarding as an educator than seeing a student genuinely proud of their accomplishments. Through DACL training, I have learned the process and importance of empowering young minds to be visionaries for their own learning and success. My favorite part of Development Assessment Capable Learners is the meaningful conversations I can have with individual students and the power behind them seeing clearly where they are and where they are headed. Watching them light up when they realize they've made significant progress because they had a vision, no matter where they were to begin with, is the most rewarding part.

> Through DCAL training, I have learned the process and importance of empowering young minds to be visionaries for their own learning and success.

CST Member

To set the foundation for ongoing DACL implementation, we coached secondary science teachers through DACL systems work. We started seeing changes in their attitudes. At first, these teachers saw this work as 'busy work' that would not have much impact on their students' learning. They are now working hard to adjust their instruction and seeing the impact through improved student learning.

CST Facilitator

A first grade teacher created a 'learning tree' that illustrates the progression of a rigorous priority standard. She spent the necessary time to help her students understand the learning journey so they could tell her where they are in their journey. She uses the 'learning tree' on a regular basis for interaction with her students as they discuss their goals and targets.
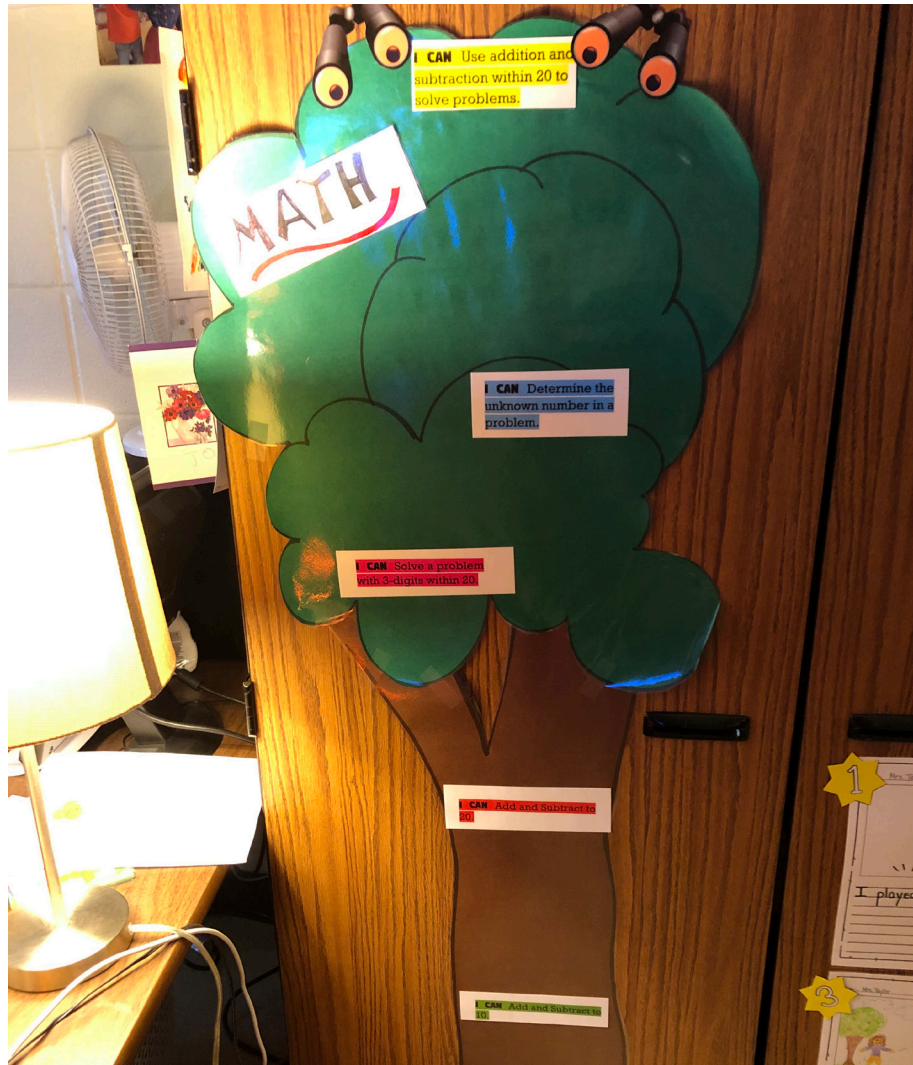
First Grade Teacher

In the past, we just thought DACL was something a teacher did every once in a while. Now, we (teachers) know that it is a different way of doing instruction where students do the thinking and teachers determine the learning activities/experiences. We are not great at it yet, but we will get better if we don't stop and go back to the way we used to do it.

School-Based Implementation Coaching (SBIC)

District Superintendent

DCI has provided feedback to encourage the SBIC process that we have implemented and our team was asked to present at the annual summit to share with others. Peer coaching has made a significant improvement in our instruction by making us more aware of what is happening in our classrooms. Our coaching conversations have been rich and well received by our staff. It was an honor to share our experience with others.

> Peer coaching has made a significant improvement in our instruction...

CST Member

Our work in one district was to help them create a more collaborative climate and culture. Several educators expressed anxiety about peers visiting their classes, but using positive feedback, team members feel less anxious and more willing to be observed. Feedback was then provided to colleagues during a coaching session.

High School Teacher

I think that having another teacher come into our room as a coaching partner has been good for our students. We serve as examples of professionals who are still learning, still growing as teachers whether we are new to the profession or have many years in the classroom.

Elementary Teacher

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.

Collective Teacher Efficacy (CTE)

First Grade Teacher

We are building Collective Teacher Efficacy as we do the tough work of helping each other implement DACL in the classroom.

> As a result of CTE, I feel as a teacher that I have a voice in my professional growth…

High School Teacher

As a result of CTE, I feel that I have a voice in my professional growth as an educator and that voice is valued.

Elementary Teacher

CTE has given me the opportunity to see that together as educators we can have a major impact on student learning, and we are not alone.

Building Principal

I feel through CTE, that my teachers feel they have a role in decision making and that our district supports the development of teacher leadership.

Building Principal

We are building CTE by creating opportunities through collaboration that allow us to share our specific skills and experience which impacts student learning.

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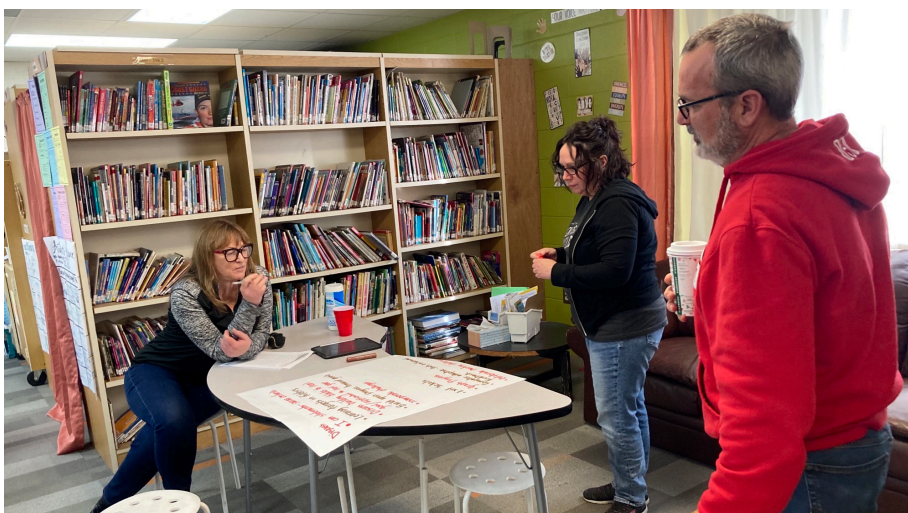
Effective teaching and learning for ALL students

District Continuous Improvement (DCI)