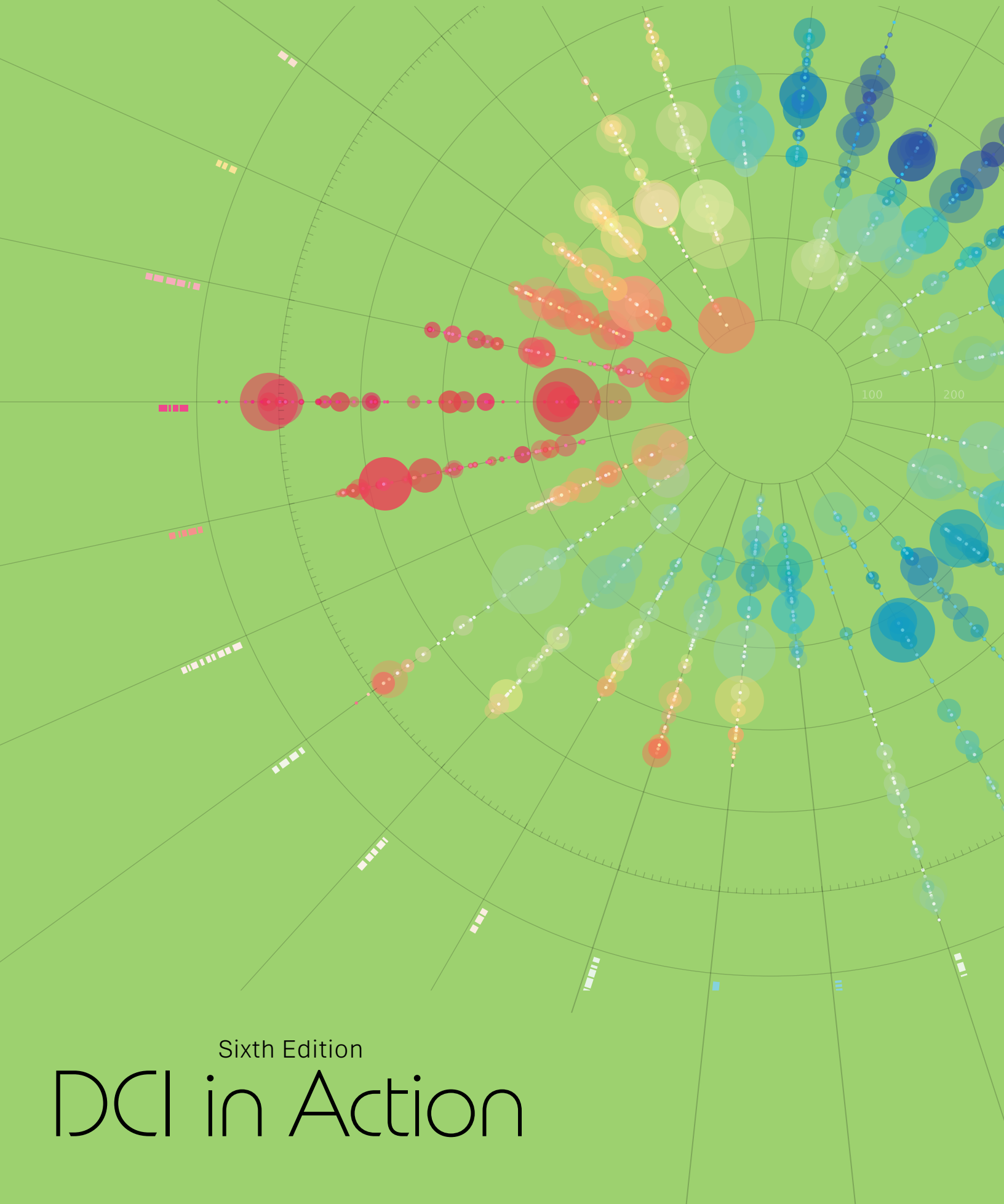


District Continuous Improvement Framework



Sixth Edition

DCI in Action



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Institute for Human Development

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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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. This statewide project became known as District Continuous Improvement (DCI) in 2019. This statewide project included 92 districts with 320 buildings in the 2025-26 school year. The graphic below illustrates the growth of the project over the years, and the impact on the number of districts, buildings, teachers, and students.

2025-26	92 Districts 320 Buildings	10,575 Teachers 112,873 Students
2024-25	109 Districts 427 Buildings	13,891 Teachers 142,913 Students
2023-24	111 Districts 451 Buildings	13,207 Teachers 172,890 Students
2022-23	124 Districts 517 Buildings	15,523 Teachers 200,045 Students
2021-22	129 Districts 540 Buildings	16,241 Teachers 209,045 Students
2020-21	157 Districts 629 Buildings	20,176 Teachers 234,698 Students
2019-20	142 Districts 608 Buildings	20,890 Teachers 245,914 Students
2018-19	64 Districts 332 Buildings	12,329 Teachers 64,457 Students
2017-18	19 Districts 103 Buildings	5,007 Teachers 64,457 Students

DCI in Action

What does DCI look like in our schools? How does it differ between districts that have been in the project for many years and those 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 five districts that have good stories to tell. 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. As you'll read later, Northeast Randolph County R-IV notes the following: "The structured approach provided by DCI has fostered meaningful, collaborative conversations among staff, creating a culture in which educators actively support one another throughout the process. As evidence of this impact, our most recent APR ranked our school 6th out of 533 schools statewide. I firmly believe our partnership with DCI played a direct role in this success. I am deeply grateful for DCI's partnership with our school and their ability to embed this work into our daily practices as simply what we do."

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



I am a firm believer that, as in life, good work in our schools doesn't happen without building relationships. Through the work of DCI and the building of Collaborative Teams, our school administrators, instructional leaders, and teachers develop relationships that focus on a culture of care, collaboration, trust, support, and purpose.

Once these relationships are established, data is shared openly and objectively and effective teaching and learning practices are implemented, coached, and collaborated on. It is through this process that student achievement is improved and student successes applauded. DCI provides a framework that is necessary for sustainable school improvement.

*Gwen M. Deimeke
IDEA Coordinator | Office of Special Education*



Fredericktown R-1 School District

704 E Highway 72, Fredericktown, MO 63645

6 Buildings | 260 Staff | 1,850 Students

www.fpsk12.org



Impact Statements

Partnering with DCI Consultants has been a turning point for the Fredericktown R-1 School District. Their collaborative approach, strong relationships with our staff, and targeted support across buildings have helped drive meaningful instructional improvement. The guidance provided through observations, walkthroughs, and professional development has led to positive changes that are already reflected in our district data at both the local and state levels. We are grateful for their leadership and look forward to the continued impact of this partnership.

*Shannon Keith Henson, Superintendent
Fredericktown R-1 School District*

It is a true joy to highlight the Fredericktown R-1 School District. The district has been engaged in District Continuous Improvement for seven years, and I have had the privilege of partnering with them for the past five years. Through targeted professional development, classroom coaching, and data-informed support, we have witnessed Fredericktown R-1 continue to grow in ways that honor and elevate the work of teachers, coaches, and administrators. Students remain at the center of every decision, with learning as the clear priority. The continuity of staff and leadership has allowed the district to remain focused and aligned, as Fredericktown R-1 consistently embraces a culture of high-quality instruction and strong leadership.

Tammy Ridgeway, CST Facilitator



FREDERICKTOWN R-1 Growth Journey

“DCI observations have been a powerful tool in our district, providing clear, actionable data that allow us to make informed instructional decisions. The process gives educators meaningful insights that drive targeted support, continuous improvement, and measurable student growth.”

Jennifer Miller, Math Academic Coach K-5

“DCI has helped strengthen my instruction as a second year teacher. It has helped me by providing clear explanations and allowed me to use resources to help keep my students engaged and motivated. I feel like, by incorporating what I’ve learned through DCI, my students have grown academically while feeling supported and successful.”

Callie Slinkard, First Grade Teacher

“The DCI Framework has been a turning point for our district. Targeted classroom observations and individualized feedback have given our teachers clear, actionable guidance they can immediately apply. As instructional practice has strengthened, we have seen greater consistency across classrooms, increased teacher confidence, and measurable gains in student achievement and test scores.

Now in our fourth year of academic coaching support, we are working to improve Data-Based Decision Making in our Tier 2 instruction, with a focus on using data and selecting interventions.”

Joe Clauser, Principal

“Our growth journey effectively began with our DCI consultants teamed with our District Leadership Team. They carefully listened to the short- and long-term goals of our district and reviewed district data and plans. They established trust with our team and began to learn the needs of the district; develop relationships with our administrators and staff; and determine specific support for each building. The support offered to the district by our DCI consultants has been instrumental in bringing about the needed changes that are already producing positive outcomes! Our district data in both local and state performances is now moving the right direction!”

Melanie Allen, Assistant Superintendent



Humansville R-IV School District

300 North Oak, Humansville, MO 65674

3 Building | 60 Staff | 345 Students

www.humansville.k12.mo.us



Impact Statements

We have found ourselves asking “How can DCI complement our team?” The answer is in numerous ways. Consistent check-ins with the facilitator and consultants have been one key to our success. We committed to a monthly briefing or meeting with DCI to monitor progress. We found that sometimes consultants see and feel things we don’t as district leaders, and since we are in buildings daily, we may be able to share things they are missing. We also committed to keeping an open mind about the DCI consultants’ vast experience. Because they are working with districts all over the state, they have so many good examples of what other districts are doing, which creates great networking. Finally, don’t be afraid to say when something isn’t working. DCI is committed to work that works, not just a stereotypical model.

*Tammy Erwin, Superintendent
Humansville R-IV School District*

Humansville R-IV School District’s commitment to continuous improvement has resulted in stronger instructional practices, increased accountability, and a shared focus on student learning across all schools. The implementation of data teams has established a consistent, collaborative process for analyzing student performance, identifying learning gaps, and responding with targeted instructional strategies. Regular instructional walkthroughs have strengthened alignment between curriculum, instruction, and assessment while providing timely feedback to educators and reinforcing high expectations for teaching and learning. An active and engaged district leadership team has guided these efforts by setting clear priorities, monitoring progress, and fostering a culture of collaboration and reflective practice. As a result, the district has increased coherence across schools, improved the use of data to inform decision making, and built collective capacity to drive sustained improvement in student outcomes.

Shanna Hight, CST Facilitator



Humansville

The Beginning

Our DCI journey began when the Agency for Teaching, Leading, and Learning issued an appealing invitation to work with DCI consultants to provide research-based professional development for our staff. It was a logical, well-timed move for our district.

Instructional Leadership

One turning point in our journey was taking the time to calibrate our leadership team's vision around learning, collaboration, and meaningful instruction. As we worked with DCI through the Instructional Leadership Module we were able to define our shared commitment, create non-negotiables, and align district-wide priorities. This early conversation made it much easier to put workable systems in place in the years that followed.

Data-Based Decision Making

Based on responses from Implementation Surveys, feedback from professional development, and benchmark data, we moved toward regularly scheduled data team meetings, with DCI consultants partnering with us along the way. Collaborative work took on structure, and we began to see trends in our data for which we sought solutions. But perhaps the most important parts of looking at data were the conversations and the shared ownership. Hearing a social studies teacher talk about text evidence with an English Language Arts teacher is powerful!

Learning Walks

This year, administrators have paired with DCI Consultants to complete learning walks. Being able to observe initiatives like LETRS or ASPIRE in action, and how they connect with DCI and our learning goals has been important. Additionally, the learning walks have given us the golden opportunity to provide almost instant, non-evaluative feedback to teachers. The consultants often have suggestions for actionable strategies and are always willing to bring examples and share expertise.





Niangua R-V School District

301 Rumsey St, Niangua, MO 65713

1 Building | 36 Staff | 261 Students

www.nianguaschools.com



Impact Statements

Niangua School District's work with DCI has had a transformative impact on the district. By developing internal experts and empowering educators at every level, the team has successfully embedded continuous improvement practices into daily work. This approach has ensured consistent use of shared improvement tools, common language, and data-driven decision making district wide. Through our customized train-the-trainer model, improvement efforts are no longer isolated or dependent on external support, but are sustained through distributed leadership and local ownership. Schools have become more responsive, implementing targeted changes that directly address student needs while fostering collaboration and professional growth.

*Samm Ravens, Director of Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction
Niangua R-V School District*

DCI has had a sustained and significant impact on Niangua R-V's capacity to engage in continuous improvement by establishing coherent systems and strengthening instructional practices. Since beginning its partnership with DCI in 2020, the district has progressed from short-term, consultant-led support to a sustainable, internally driven continuous improvement process aligned to the framework. Through DCI's guidance, Niangua developed collaborative structures which increased collective efficacy among educators and created a shared understanding of expectations for teaching and learning. The emphasis is on building systems rather than relying on individuals and has proved especially impactful during multiple leadership transitions. These systems ensured continuity for teachers and students and reduced variability in instructional practices. The district now operates with greater clarity, coherence, and confidence in its ability to monitor implementation, respond to evidence, and sustain growth over time.

Shanna Hight, CST Facilitator



Niangua began its partnership with DCI in 2020 during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. During this period, the district utilized virtual learning platforms to sustain professional learning and support system-level capacity building. Initial work focused on maintaining instructional continuity while engaging in early cycles of inquiry aligned to the DCI Framework.

During the 2023–2024 school year, the district strengthened its continuous improvement efforts by implementing collaborative data teams led by the Coaching Support Team. These teams included educators across grade levels and content areas and focused on analyzing student learning data, identifying effective instructional practices, and monitoring implementation. This work increased collective efficacy and supported consistent instructional decision making across the system.

In the 2024–2025 school year, the addition of a curriculum director marked a key shift in Niangua’s DCI implementation. The district transitioned to a train-the-trainer model, increasing internal capacity and ownership of professional learning. The curriculum director now leads job-embedded professional development with ongoing support from the Coaching Support Team. Together, they conduct instructional walkthroughs and learning walks to monitor fidelity of implementation, identify patterns of practice, and determine targeted next steps within the district’s continuous improvement cycle.

Throughout its partnership with DCI, Niangua has experienced leadership transitions, including three superintendents and two elementary principals. Despite these changes, the district’s focus on building sustainable systems and processes through the DCI Framework has provided stability and coherence for educators and students. The intentional use of cycles of inquiry, implementation monitoring, and reflection has supported continuous growth and ensured consistent instructional practices across the district.



Northeast Randolph County R-IV School District

301 W Martin, Cairo, MO 65239

2 Buildings | 68 Staff | 336 Students

ner4.k12.mo.us



Impact Statements

Northeast Randolph County R-IV Schools have greatly benefited from the partnership with DCI. Through DCI's exceptional guidance and coaching, combined with the support of district leadership, our teachers now have a deep understanding of the value of this work and have fully embraced the process. Instructional decisions across the district are now data driven, and teachers have developed a strong habit of reflection on their classroom practices to continuously improve student outcomes. The structured approach provided by DCI has fostered meaningful, collaborative conversations among staff, creating a culture in which educators actively support one another throughout the process.

As evidence of this impact, our most recent APR ranked our school 6th out of 533 schools statewide. I firmly believe our partnership with DCI played a direct role in this success.

I am deeply grateful for DCI's partnership with our school and their ability to embed this work into our daily practices as simply 'what we do.'

*Dave Samuel, Superintendent
Northeast Randolph County R-IV School District*

As a DCI facilitator, I have seen Northeast Randolph County R-IV Schools develop from an early phase of growth and innovation into a district with a coherent instructional system grounded in shared leadership and reflective practice. Through intentional systems work, leadership development, and focused professional learning, educators consistently use data to guide instruction and engage in collaborative conversations centered on student learning. The implementation of DCI structures, including DACL practices, common formative assessments, and leadership modules, have brought clarity, alignment, and trust across the district. These systems have strengthened teacher practice and student ownership of learning, leading to improved engagement, consistency, and academic outcomes. The district's continued success, including strong statewide performance, reflects the sustainability of this work and a shared commitment to continuous improvement.

Kirt Malone, CST Facilitator

ROAD TO SUCCESS



1. Laying the Roadwork...

Northeast Randolph County R-IV leaders laid a solid foundation by developing a shared vision of where the district needed to go and how to get to there. The DCI Leadership Professional Learning Modules supported our staff in developing a shared vision, intentional data use, and consistent language.

2. Navigating the Path...

Our team designed a comprehensive instructional system that clearly outlines the following priority expectations.

- Our system promotes student ownership of learning. Through DACL practices, students understand what they are learning and why it matters, resulting in meaningful opportunities to set learning goals and monitor their progress.
- We adopted Standards-Based Grading across all grade levels. Effective communication with staff and parents was critical to successful implementation.

3. Data Driven...

With the help of our DCI consultants, the district established a structured process that makes data collection both manageable and purposeful.

Having easy access to student data results in productive and focused data meetings. We are deeply committed to supporting every learner and will monitor progress to adjust instruction. The DCI process has helped refine our data analysis practices.

4. Moving on Down the Road....

Sustaining this work requires the commitment of everyone.

- Administration guides and supports staff through the process, while fostering a culture in which teachers communicate openly, provide constructive feedback, and reflect on their daily practices. As a district, we are committed to providing the time, resources, and materials necessary for this work to succeed.
- Teachers work collaboratively toward the clear, targeted goals resulting in meaningful instructional improvements. Embedded DCI practices have resulted in an instructional system deeply ingrained in our daily practices.
- Students are both active participants and also the beneficiaries of this carefully guided work.



Crawford County R-I School District

1444 Old Highway 66, Bourbon, MO 65441

3 Buildings | 148 Staff | 762 Students

www.warhawks.us



Impact Statements

The Crawford County R-I School District was drawn to DCI-MTSS because it aligned naturally with our people centered, purpose driven approach. We first started with the DCI Framework and moved into the DCI-MTSS work with clarity and patience. To ensure buy-in, we made sure the staff understood that DCI-MTSS exists to support both them and their students. We were looking for a framework that supported students and staff through strong relationships, early identification, and intentional responses without becoming just another initiative. DCI-MTSS stood out because it emphasized shared responsibility and proactive support. It helped us slow down, notice students earlier, and respond with care and consistency rather than reaction. Our DCI-MTSS Coaching Support Team has been essential and proactive support partners guiding the work and helping our leadership teams take intentional first steps, reminding staff they are not alone. DCI-MTSS connects people, purpose, and practice. It aligns academic, behavioral, and social emotional supports into one coherent system. The work has led to stronger collaboration, clearer decision making, and earlier support for students. DCI-MTSS has strengthened our systems while keeping people at the center of the work!

Crawford County R-I is an excellent example of a district that has transitioned from DCI to DCI-MTSS. Read about their story!

*Brian Witt, Superintendent
Crawford County R-I School District*

The journey with Crawford County R-I began with MMD, progressed into DCI, and continues through DCI-MTSS. The district's dedication and intentionality in maintaining a focus on high-quality instruction, purposeful use of data, and strong systems of support for all students is commendable and worthy of celebration.

Tammy Ridgeway, CST Facilitator

Another aspect of Crawford County R-I's journey to DCI-MTSS is through many years of successful implementation of PBIS. The Warhawk Way is truly how this district teaches their students how to discover their purpose and reach their potential. The three buildings have received SW-PBS Awards of Excellence for a combined 20 years!

Becky Boggs, PBS Consultant



Crawford County R-I School District

People-Centered • Purpose-Driven • Warhawk-Strong

Building from DCI to DCI-MTSS

Crawford County R-I stands on a simple conviction: when people feel seen, supported, and connected, learning accelerates. Our district's mission to empower students to discover their purpose and reach their potential guides every decision, from early childhood to graduation.

DBDM at All Levels

Data-Based Decision Making is embedded in DLT, BLT, and Collaborative Team structures. Teams review screeners, walkthrough trends, intervention outcomes, and common assessments to determine next steps.

SBIC Coaching & Leadership

School-Based Implementation Coaching strengthens teacher leadership. Across buildings, staff engage in peer coaching cycles, learning walks, rubric calibration, and reflective conversations that sharpen instructional practice.

Unified DCI-MTSS System (Early Childhood–12)

DCI-MTSS is a living system built on instructional clarity, early identification, tiered supports, and ongoing data cycles.

Tier 1 Instruction

Tier 1 instruction is the heartbeat of our system. Teachers apply strategies such as clear learning targets, descriptive feedback, modeling, student reflection, and PBIS-aligned behavior expectations.

Tier 2 Supports

Students enter Tier 2 when data shows they are not meeting benchmarks — STAR growth, IXL diagnostics, Dyslexia screeners, and SAEBRS indicators guide placement. Small group interventions occur 2–3 times weekly, with progress monitoring built into Collaborative Teams cycles.

Tier 3 Supports

Tier 3 provides individualized intervention, frequent progress monitoring, and collaboration with SPED and counselors. It reflects our commitment to ensuring every learner receives exactly what they need.

“We finally have a system that keeps students from slipping through the cracks.”

Advice from Administrators

Support and participation from district administrators is a key element for successful outcomes. 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.”

Melissa Payne

Assistant Superintendent, Ava R-1 School District

Ava R-1 is a rural school district located in southwest Missouri, serving approximately 1,400 students. We are the only K-12 district in the county, and we receive additional high schoolers from our four K-8 feeder schools. All district buildings are located on a single campus, which contributes to a strong sense of community and collaboration. Our district includes an early childhood center, a K-4 elementary school, a 5-8 middle school, and a 9-12 high school. Each building is supported by two administrators, and our average class size is approximately 18 students per teacher. Our staff would describe Ava R-1 as a close-knit school family committed to student success.

When beginning the DCI work, my advice would be to collaborate as much as possible and trust the process. I work closely with our DCI consultants as true colleagues—they are invested in both me and our district and function as an extension of our leadership team. I consistently value our time together, whether we are brainstorming or problem-solving, as they are always willing to support us in meaningful ways. It is also important to remain faithful to the process. Districts should pay close attention to the rubrics and engage in honest self-assessment. If a district is not yet ‘proficient’ in a given area, continue refining practices until they fully meet expectations. That upfront productivity and attention to detail ultimately leads to stronger implementation and better outcomes for teachers and students.

I have experienced the process both with and without a District Leadership Team, and the difference is significant. Without a DLT, our efforts were far less effective. Implementing a DLT greatly enhanced clarity, improved communication, and strengthened collaboration across the district. Building Leadership Teams began supporting one another more consistently, and the opportunities for collaboration increased. As a result, our overall culture has improved dramatically.

“

Implementing a DLT greatly enhanced clarity, improved communication, and strengthened collaboration...

DCI has been an integral part of our Continuous School Improvement Plan (CSIP). Consultants served as active members of our CSIP team and supported the development of Phase I of our plan. They maintained regular communication with me as the district leader to monitor progress and identify areas where additional support was

needed. This support included curriculum alignment and assessment revisions, which were addressed through consistent meetings with grade-level and department-level teams. DCI consultants were truly ‘boots on the ground,’ working directly with teachers to ensure meetings resulted in tangible products and meaningful progress.

From an administrative perspective, one of the greatest strengths of DCI is having a consultant who serves as a trusted thought partner. In administration, collaboration can be challenging, especially without a large leadership team. I value having someone who understands our district’s strengths and challenges and can help problem-solve from an outside perspective. When I find myself limited by tunnel vision, my consultant helps generate new ideas and, just as importantly, helps turn those ideas into actionable steps. Teachers also benefit greatly from DCI support. Having a direct point of contact allows teachers to quickly seek guidance and continue moving forward, rather than waiting for an administrator who may be unavailable due to competing responsibilities. This accessibility has been incredibly valuable.

DCI is simply part of how we operate as a district. Our staff is fully invested in the process, and the work aligns seamlessly with best practices for school improvement. This shared commitment has helped ensure sustainability. DCI is not ‘one more initiative.’ School improvement is already a priority, and DCI serves as a support for the work districts are already doing. The framework allows districts to work smarter, not harder.

Benjamin Potter

Assistant Superintendent, Dallas County R-1 School District

Dallas County R-1 School District is a rural PreK-12 district serving approximately 1,450 students across an early childhood, elementary, middle, high school, and technical center. Geographically, we are among the largest districts in the state in terms of land area. That geographic scale shapes much of our work: transportation logistics, equitable access to services, and maintaining coherence across multiple schools and communities. Despite that breadth, we are committed to collaboration and clarity: we aim to ensure that every student receives a consistent, high-quality experience. At the same time, we continue to build on our strengths in curriculum alignment, adult collaboration, and systems for intervention and support.



When we began the DCI work, we treated it as a culture-building process, not just another initiative. We invested early in clarifying our instructional vision and the ‘why’ behind the partnership. We used the opportunity to build shared language and expectations across systems and structures. The goal isn’t just to ‘do DCI.’ We want to build into our district DNA habits of collaboration, data-driven decision making, and providing support to students not yet on grade level. It becomes not just what you do, but who you are.

Our District Leadership Team is vital to the success of this work! They serve as both the strategic engine behind district implementation and the connection across buildings. They understand where their school is in the process and what supports they need to move forward. Without the District Leadership Team, efforts risk becoming siloed or inconsistent. Their buy-in ensures that implementation is clear, coordinated, and supported by two-way communication throughout the system.

The DCI Framework gives us a clear structure for aligning curriculum, instruction, and assessment, especially in moving back to data-based decision making for instructional support. DCI helps us embed instructional leadership more deeply into our CSIP, helping us shift from compliance-oriented goals to implementing adult learning best practices into our professional development, to ultimately truly supporting our students in their learning journey.

The best thing about DCI is the hands-on support they offer as we move to a more effective collaborative team of teachers who work together to support student growth. It has also shifted how our leaders engage with data, not just looking at it, but using it to increase student learning support.

We have embedded the practices into our buildings and district. We are also building internal capacity by developing teacher leaders who can facilitate collaborative discussions and lead instructional cycles without waiting for central office direction. Sustainability depends on creating systems, not creating compliance.



We are building internal capacity by developing teacher leaders...

My last words of advice are “Don’t rush the work - go slow to go fast.” Fast implementation often leads to shallow impact, so focus on clarity, consistency, and culture first. Create systems that are built to last, so that it doesn’t matter which teacher or administrator is in the building or district, the identity is ingrained in the structure of the district.

Advice from RPDC Directors

Julie Blaine

Director, Central RPDC

DCI can support school districts at just the right time by taking the first steps to look at meaningful student data collaboratively. DCI then provides the background knowledge, the structure, and the guidance districts need to improve, implement, and sustain teaching and learning. DCI is not some grand new initiative. DCI supports and accelerates the direction school districts are already headed. I believe the work of District Continuous Improvement will have a lasting positive impact on teaching and learning in districts.



Chuck Garner

Director, Agency for Teaching, Leading and Learning

The DCI process continues to prove itself as a powerful catalyst for sustained improvement. Through intentional systems thinking and coaching support, districts are empowered to align priorities, enhance instructional practices, and build leadership capacity. The result is not just short-term progress, but long-lasting, systemic improvement that becomes part of the district's culture—ensuring continuous growth and success, even through transitions and challenges.

Jennee Gregory

Director, Northwest Regional Development Center

We have witnessed the impact that District Continuous Improvement has on transforming school systems across Missouri. DCI provides a structured, sustainable framework that helps districts align leadership, instruction, and data-driven decision making to improve outcomes for all learners. What makes DCI so powerful is its emphasis on building internal capacity, empowering educators to lead continuous improvement from within rather than relying on external initiatives. DCI fosters alignment, strengthens collaboration, and keeps the focus where it matters most—on meaningful learning and lasting growth for every student.

Michael Pragman

Director, Kansas City RPDC

DCI offers districts up-to-date professional development support. Consultants work alongside superintendents and leadership teams to determine the areas of focused support needed specific to their district based on various data sources. They create a personalized Professional Development Plan that connects to the district's

Sustained systems are created that lead to improved student learning.

Continuous School Improvement Plan. Areas of focused support can include strengthening Instructional or Systems Leadership or focusing on foundational areas such as Collaborative Teams, Common Formative Assessment, and Data-Based Decision Making. Wherever districts and CSTs decide to begin the DCI work, sustained systems are created that lead to improved student learning.

Amy Ramsdell

Director, Heart of Missouri RPDC

In my opinion, DCI is the right work for every district. It uses a systems approach to address all issues and programs a district is working on. While many teachers and administrators think DCI is just ‘one more thing,’ I would say that instead it helps a district work smarter, not harder. Teachers and administrators that I have worked with say it is the one thing that helped them all get on the same page to impact climate, culture, and students. One caution I have is that many administrators come into this process wanting to see quick results. I made this mistake myself as the central office administrator bringing DCI into my district. It is important to start with your district leadership team and the leadership module, forming the foundation for the program. This will enable the roll-out into buildings to be consistent, with all building administrators understanding DCI and the district-chosen goals. I also recommend completing a District Action Plan and incorporating DCI into the CSIP prior to starting the building-level pieces. This demonstrates the administration’s support for, and expectations of, DCI implementation at all levels. In other words, go slow in the beginning in order to go fast later on. Districts that do not initially focus on setting a foundation can find themselves having to go back to accomplish this, or end up without administrator or teacher buy-in.

John Waters

Director, Education PLUS/St. Louis RPDC

DCI In Action is very visible in the districts that are choosing to implement 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 Missouri. It can create long lasting systems in schools.



DCI is a system that coaches teachers and leaders, not catches them.

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 on the value of DCI and district growth; the importance of having a system in place with leadership support; and how high-quality professional development can impact student learning.

Value of DCI and District Growth

CST Member

During a session reviewing progress of collaborative data teams and outlining next steps, by showing examples of exemplary status, the high school principal shared the good news with the staff that the APR has gone up 10 points! The principal thanked the DCI consultants for their work done in the district for the last three years. He noted that awareness of rigor of instruction, direct connection to the priority standards, and the examination of data all significantly contributed to their gains.

Elementary Principal

Our staff has grown as a result of valuable feedback from our facilitator and CST members. The relationships built with them, and the time they give us, has helped make us better instructional leaders.

Our staff has grown as a result of valuable feedback...

Fourth Grade Teacher

Implementing DCI has resulted in consistent collaboration, intentional use of formative data, and targeted instruction. Students are demonstrating high levels of engagement, clarity around learning expectations, and sustained growth on both classroom assessments and standardized measures.

High School Principal

I feel the best thing about DCI is we now have common language that connects to our goals. This equips us to provide intentional instruction and meets the needs of all students as they strive to become assessment capable learners.



District Administrator

DCI is research based work and allows our teachers to better understand that good instruction allows students to become assessment capable which leads to district improvement.



This work has empowered teachers...

District Superintendent

Our DCI consultants have empowered the teachers in our district by fostering the culture of continuous improvement and collective teacher efficacy.

District Superintendent

Our teachers have learned to be open and vulnerable with their peers, allowing everyone to grow and benefit collectively.

Systems Approach and Leadership

District Superintendent

My district is moving forward with implementation of data teams in each building. During District Leadership Team meetings, we now have proactive conversations about potential roadblocks and solutions for next steps.

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 provide 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 consultants provide consistent professional development to the districts. This training emphasizes that when administrators collaborate in an organized way, they work toward sustainability of 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; 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, PD, teacher growth, and student success which leads to full implementation of the DCI framework.

Districts are making connections between teacher evaluation, PD, teacher growth, and student success.

CST Facilitator

As we worked on a PD presentation with a building principal and dean of students, they made great connections between Developing Assessment Capable Learners and Data-Based Decision Making, focusing on where their teachers are and where they were trying to lead them. We had an in-depth conversation as they began to see the connections between simple learning targets to summative assessments and important student data.

CST Facilitator

The DCI Framework is a systemic approach to district improvement. The statewide collaboration ensures that all Missouri districts have access to high quality professional development to maximize district performance.

Elementary Principal

The DCI leadership modules supported us in developing a shared vision, intentional use of data, and consistent language. This support assisted in our efforts to build trust and alignment across staff. Teachers are more willing to engage in honest and sometime difficult conversations while still valuing the perspective and expertise of their colleagues. These conversations strengthened our collaboration and collective responsibility for student learning.



High-Quality Professional Development

Curriculum Director

We consider the DCI work as some of the highest quality professional development because of the feedback given to the teaching staff. The consultants also train our administrators in how to provide effective feedback.



We consider DCI some of the highest quality professional development...

CST Member

Within my first month as a DCI consultant, I gained immediate proficiency in leveraging DESE's Performance Level Descriptors and Item Specifications for rigorous assessment design. This critical competency is a significant professional advantage; had I been equipped with these foundational frameworks as a principal, they would have served as the strategic blueprint for professional development, maximizing teacher effectiveness in curriculum and instruction.

CST Facilitator

I presented district-wide professional development focused on an overview of DCI with all district staff. We discussed purpose, logistics, expectations, and background research of DCI. Groups then attended separate sessions on metacognitive strategies and Tier 1 behavior supports. This district does not have a history of professional development so we focused on providing a positive experience with concrete ideas that could immediately be implemented in their classrooms.

CST Facilitator

We used a walkthrough experience with administrators to help them recognize the connections to professional development that focuses on rigor and fidelity. The administrators appreciated the chance to discuss this and were able to calibrate perceptions after viewing classrooms.

High School Teacher

After PD with a CST consultant I now place a major emphasis on learning targets. I clearly post them in the room and refer to them often throughout the lesson. My students now understand the need for setting goals of their own based on these targets.

Curriculum Director

The VLP is a key feature of DCI. It is a valuable tool for both teachers and administrators. It helps monitor growth throughout the year that ensures teachers are gaining knowledge and applying it in their classrooms.

The VLP is a key feature of DCI. It is a valuable tool for both teachers and administrators.

CST Member

I am honored to be a consultant in the DCI work. Working closely with a district is rewarding when I see their journey as they travel toward school improvement.

Elementary Principal

The coaching and professional learning provided through DCI has helped us in communicating clear expectations while fostering a culture of collaborative decision making. Having outside representation with an external perspective brought clarity and consistency to our work. This support has been instrumental in building trust, alignment, and collective ownership of our goals.

Building Administrator

I often make PD assignments in the Virtual Learning Platform. The flexibility gives me a great way to introduce our focus to the teachers as they work through a module.



Getting Started and Sustaining the DCI Work

Sustainability is important with this work. Effective leadership and a strong communication protocol set the foundation. The following is advice on how to achieve and sustain your goals from the start of DCI in your district.

Elementary Principal

As a new principal, DCI didn't just teach me to lead. The consultants' belief in me, together with DCI strategies, gave me the confidence, clarity, and tools to transform our school. In my second year working with DCI, test scores and student achievement increased and, more importantly, our culture shifted toward purposeful teacher collaboration and data-driven decision making. I am grateful to DCI for turning hope into results and helping leadership change students' lives.



The consultants' belief in me, together with DCI strategies, gave me the confidence, clarity, and tools...

DLT Member

The DCI Leadership modules are crucial when developing leadership skills. They allow leaders to gain a deeper understanding of how important the routines, procedures, roadblocks, and successes are when developing a plan of action.

Superintendent

The thoughtful analysis of data and reflective practice modeled through this work is now the norm within our district.

Elementary Principal

Establishing a clear, targeted foundation was the first step in coming together as a staff and gaining the traction needed to make meaningful instructional improvements. From there, our journey accelerated as the leadership team spear-headed research, piloted programs, and gathered feedback. Together, we worked to identify the most effective practices that would lead to increased student achievement. While the work is not always easy, the most important part was our commitment to keep moving forward.

Elementary Principal

We embedded DCI into our daily systems, including curriculum development, collaborative teams, and data analysis. As a result, we now have an instructional system that is deeply ingrained in our daily practices. Ongoing reflection and consistent communication ensures this work is sustained with fidelity, continues to guide instructional decisions, and improves student learning. At the heart of the DCI process is continuous improvement. It is not a 'fix it and leave it' approach, but an ongoing commitment to growth, where the door is always open for refinement and progression.

CST Member

A systemic communication plan should be developed and implemented. This, along with buy in, leads to sustainability.

Superintendent

Sustaining the work requires the commitment of everyone. Administration must guide and support staff throughout the process, while fostering a culture where teachers can communicate openly, provide constructive feedback, and reflect on their daily practices.

Superintendent

As a district, we are committed to providing the time, resources, materials, and fiscal support necessary for this work to succeed. Becoming the best and helping our students reach their fullest potential remains our ultimate priority, driving and sustaining our efforts every day.

DLT Member

A strong District Leadership Team is important. Each member should have communication roles which leads to a strong and consistent message district wide.



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

CST Facilitator

We met with administrators to provide an overview of DCI and review their CWIS results. They shared their current reality and their motivation for joining with DCI. Together we identified next steps and areas of focus.

DLT Member

We meet with our facilitator and the CST members to review our CWIS results every spring. We identify our growth and weaknesses. This informs us about our plan of action for the next year.

CST Facilitator

The review of one district's CWIS results led to a discussion of language and benefit of communication. They shared current reality and whether they agreed with the teachers' perspectives. They discussed sharing and learning from each other as an administrative team. The administration wants to begin visiting each other's buildings to learn from each other and to focus on consistency and cohesiveness across the district.



Discussion of CWIS results led to a discussion of language and the benefit of communication...

Self-Assessment Practice Profiles

Building Principal

We use SAPPs to help teachers understand where we are as a building in terms of our focus area.

District Administrator

We use SAPPs as formative assessments for our staff three times a year. This helps determine growth as we work toward our growth plan.

District Superintendent

The perceptual data from SAPPs are very useful when determining next steps for our district and staff.

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)

CST Member

Teachers and administrators have worked collaboratively to clarify learning targets, align instruction to standards, and ensure students clearly understand what they are learning and why. This shared focus has created greater consistency across classrooms, strengthening instructional practices and establishing a common vision for high-quality teaching and learning.

Teachers and administrators work collaboratively to clarify learning targets...

Third Grade Teacher

Collaborating with coworkers and administrators is key in maintaining an effective curriculum. Through collaboration, educators can share ideas, reflect on current student progress, and make thoughtful adjustments to grade level curriculum and materials. Ongoing collaboration ensures our curriculum stays aligned with state standards while also meeting the needs of students.

Middle School Teacher

We no longer meet for the 'sake of meeting.' Through the DCI work our collaborative teams are structured with purpose. Our conversations focus on students and data that lead to improvement.



Data-Based Decision Making (DBDM)

CST Member

This district has committed to using data to inform instructional decisions and to design rigorous lessons/units that promote deep learning. Because of this, educators are engaging in meaningful professional conversations



Instruction is becoming more intentional, challenging, and engaging...

that drive instruction and support within classrooms. As a result, instruction is becoming more intentional, challenging, and engaging—ensuring that all students are supported and pushed toward success. The dedication of this district to continuous improvement is evident and the impact on student achievement continues to grow.

High School Principal

Through the DBDM process we are seeing tremendous student growth. During our collaborative team meetings, we plan strategies to support students with an emphasis on both enrichment and skills that need to be retaught.

High School Teacher

Our data team has helped me understand that any time I implement a new practice and reflect on data, it helps students.

CST Member

As we continue to provide support focusing on Data-Based Decision Making, one teacher noted that she is “learning so much about IReady, the data it provides, and how to use that information in my classroom.”

CST Member

As we coach and support the DBDM process, teachers are beginning to think deeply about the data as they continue to connect it to instructional practices and are asking “can we look at data next time?”

Elementary Teacher

We must remember to not only consider academic needs during the DBDM process but to also determine social and behavioral needs when collaborating.

Common Formative Assessments (CFA)

CST Facilitator

One of the main reasons we coach and train on Common Formative Assessments is to help teachers set goals for themselves as well as their students. They try new strategies that lead to more effective instruction.

Fourth Grade Teacher

As a team, we meet regularly to analyze student learning using common formative assessments aligned to priority standards. These collaborative conversations allow us to identify trends, share instructional strategies, and make timely adjustments to instruction to meet student needs.

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 ensures that there is consistency across grade levels or departments for both student and teacher performance.

Effective Teaching and Learning Practices (ETLPs)

High School Teacher

Having evidence of strong and weak work not only helps my students but additionally helped me talk to parents at parent-teacher conferences about their student's progress.

Instructional Coach

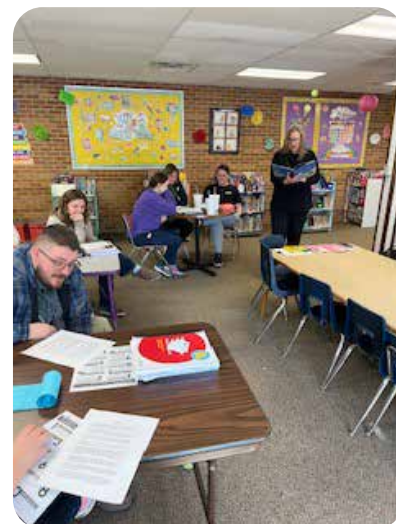
DCI has enhanced our teaching in the district. The teachers are combining feedback with learning targets and student self-assessment. Our students are given more time for reflection that promotes their academic growth

Middle School Teacher

After being coached on DACL, I have learned to give descriptive feedback. I can now guide my students toward self-regulation as they assess their work.

Special Education Teacher

The walkthroughs in my classroom have provided me with specific feedback which is helpful as I define my teaching strategies.



Elementary Teacher

My DCI journey has resulted in more collaboration focused on continuous improvement that results in the growth of all students.

DCI Facilitator

During a grade-level collaborative team meeting, a CST member shared a video to demonstrate what DACL looks like in the classroom. Teachers were thankful for the “amazing demonstration of the DACL process” in real life.

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, is the most rewarding part.

“
I have learned the importance of empowering young minds to be visionaries of their own learning and success...

High School Teacher

As an Algebra 1 teacher, I feel the learning targets and success criteria are helping my students find clarity in their learning and help me provide better instruction.

Elementary Teacher

After just one training on DACL, I appreciate the strategies that were shared to help students develop ownership for their learning. I look forward to more learning and more sessions!

High School Teacher

As a high school teacher, I am learning how to review formative assessments and use questioning in connection to learning targets with students to build engagement and metacognitive strategies.



School-Based Implementation Coaching (SBIC)

Elementary Art Teacher

As an art teacher, I rarely have the opportunity to see how my students interact in their regular classroom environment. During my initial peer coaching experience, I was placed in a preschool classroom. It was humbling to see how my fellow colleague is able to have a room full of 3 to 4 year old students successfully working in different 'centers' simultaneously. Her procedures, expectations, rules, and climate of the classroom allows for this to take place. I recognize the difference in our personalities and teaching styles. Differences can be beneficial because our students also have various learning styles and personalities. Her 'I Can' statements were in multiple areas of the room, and she had plenty of clear work examples as well. The time that is spent with peer coaching is worth every minute, and I hope to continue to learn from those around me.

The time that I have spent with peer coaching is worth every minute...

Elementary Teacher

Through peer coaching, I have observed a variety of strategies and styles. The experience has given me the courage to try new things in my classroom.

District Superintendent

Our collaborative teams are having rich discussions on different instructional strategies they are learning from peer coaching. Teachers are appreciative of the feedback they receive from this type of coaching.

Collective Teacher Efficacy (CTE)

Elementary Teacher

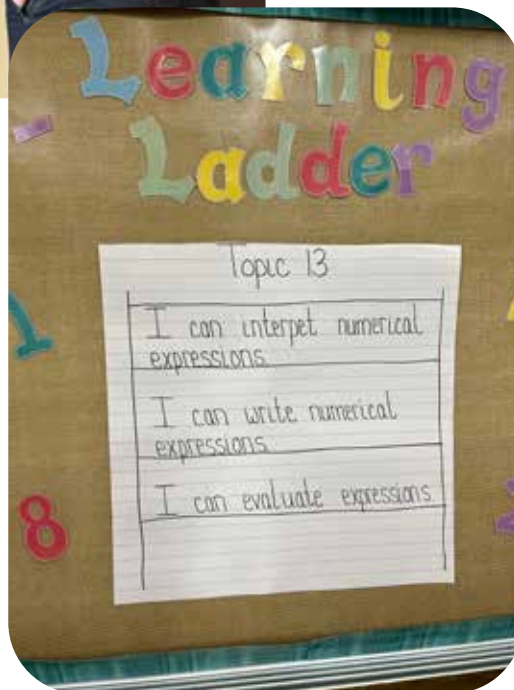
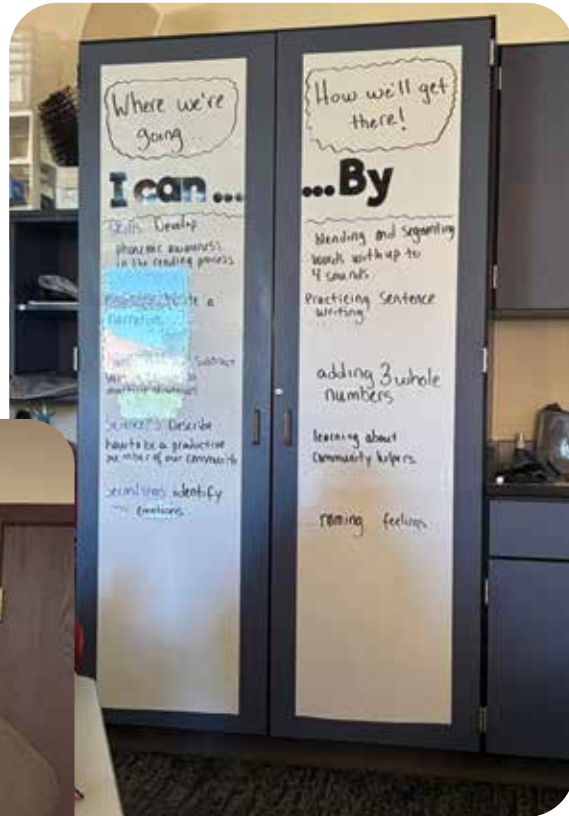
We are building collective efficacy as we support each other in the classroom. Together as educators we have a major impact on student learning and we are not alone.

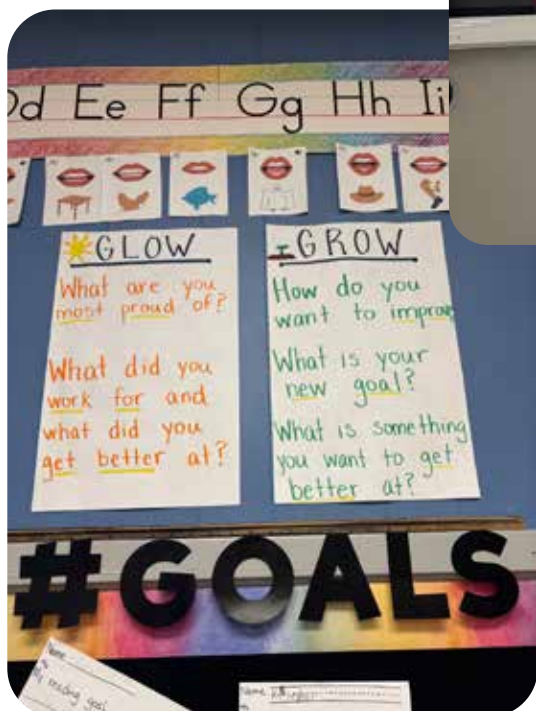
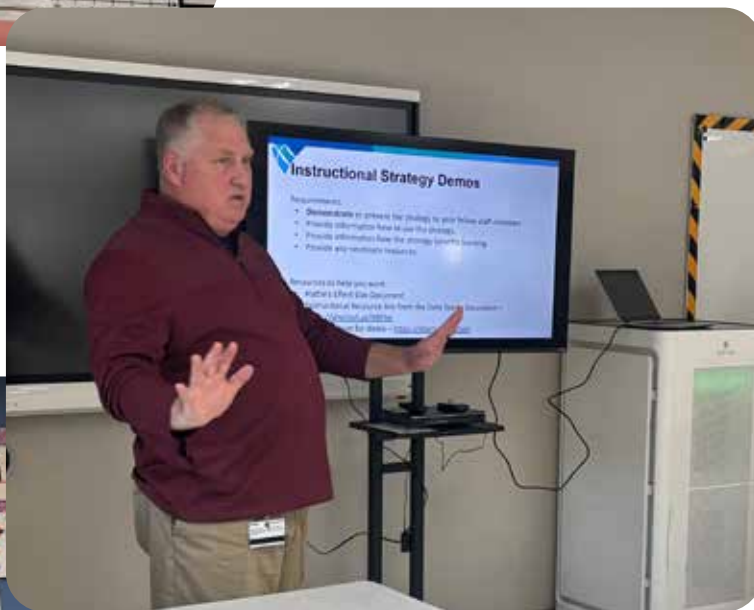
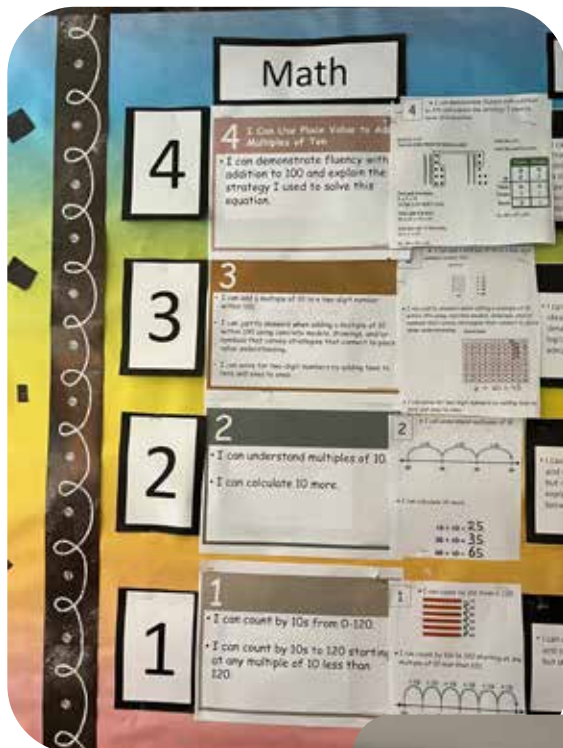
Elementary Principal

CTE is about empowerment and teamwork. I anticipate our efficacy journey will result in higher student achievement.

Building Principal

CTE has resulted in a shared belief among teachers that their combined efforts can positively influence student outcomes. The teachers in my building are working toward having a collective efficacy that will cultivate student success.





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