

What Matters Most: Key Practices (BEES and Strategic Plan Partners)

The following survey is based on *Moving Your Numbers, Key Practices Guide* developed by the National Center on Educational Outcomes, and can be downloaded at <http://movingyournumbers.org/key-practices/key-practices-guide>.

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Key Practice 1: Use Data Well

While districts, schools, and individual teachers use data and have been for some time now, there has been too much emphasis placed only on the performance of students on state assessments. While these data are important for strategic planning, they provide little ongoing guidance to teachers or administrators. Districts that have “moved their numbers” for all children have or are engaged in developing district-wide processes that allow for more collective use of relevant data to make smarter decisions, including the ongoing assessment of teaching and learning at the classroom, school, and district levels. These processes include the development, implementation, and ongoing use of teacher-developed formative assessments, and the use of grade-level/departmental/course, and vertical teams to collaboratively score these shared assessments and plan for shared instruction. They also include the use of building and district benchmark assessments. Fullan (2008) states that principals working directly with teachers in the use of data is more than twice as powerful as any other leadership dimension, and Leithwood and Jantzi (2008) found that the reliability for assessing student learning and district decision making was one critical characteristic of effective districts.

Response Scale

- 1 = Ideal Application
- 2 = Acceptable Application
- 3 = Less than Acceptable Application (in need of additional support/practice)
- 4 = Inadequate Application

For increasing the performance of students with disabilities as part of district-wide improvement, to what degree did BEES and its Strategic Plan partners:

	1	2	3	4
Use data to identify and respond to common needs related to student learning across areas (e.g., regions, zones, intermediate/cooperative service areas, districts) of the state?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Establish clear expectations for effective data use across BEES offices and departments, facilitating coherence and reducing fragmentation in the services and/or supports provided to districts?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Refine, redefine, or create new state systems of support focused on building the capacity of all districts in the state to improve instructional practice and student learning?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Establish mechanisms for providing high-quality and consistent support - including facilitation and professional development - to all districts in the state in the effective use of data to improve the learning of all students and groups of students, such as students with disabilities?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Provide tools/products/services that facilitate the effective use of data by all districts, schools, and teachers in improving instructional practice and student learning?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ensure that state initiatives are targeted to providing support to underperforming districts and, at the same time, are applicable to and used by all districts in the state to continually support higher levels of learning for all students?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please provide specific examples of the way data was used to illustrate your ratings above.

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Key Practice 2: Focus Your Goals

When asked to describe the new initiatives undertaken in the last year or two, most teachers and administrators would list a litany of initiatives, often disconnected. If asked, "What are the district or school improvement initiatives?" most teachers and administrators often cannot articulate them. Reeves (2006) referred to this problem as "initiative fatigue," while Fullan (2008) calls this "repetitive change syndrome." If teachers, schools, and districts are to make improvement then they must be allowed and encouraged to focus on a few critical things well. As Patterson, et al. (2008) notes, "a few behaviors can drive a lot of change... Enormous influence comes from focusing on just a few vital behaviors." Leithwood and Jantzi (2008) recommend focusing the goals on student learning through the use of specific forms of instruction. They also recommend that the strategies be targeted on specific areas of low performance and phased in over time. Robinson (2008) identifies goal setting as one of the most critical school leadership responsibilities.

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For increasing the performance of students with disabilities as part of district-wide improvement, to what degree did BEES and its Strategic Plan partners:

	1	2	3	4
Focus and align their collective work to effectively support all districts, schools, and teachers in improving instructional practice and student learning?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Establish common goals that require offices and departments across BEES to work together to build the capacity of all districts, schools, and teachers in the state?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Provide tools, products, and/or services that facilitate focused goal setting by all districts, schools, and teacher teams in improving instructional practice and student learning?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Provide tools, products, and/or services that facilitate the development of coherent district and school plans that are useful in helping all districts, schools, and teacher teams to improve instructional practice and student learning?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Establish mechanisms for providing high-quality and consistent support - including facilitation and professional development - to all districts in the state in developing a limited number of focused goals directly related to district-identified needs in the area of instruction and student learning?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please provide specific examples of the way goal setting was used to illustrate your ratings above.

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Key Practice 3: Select and Implement Shared Instructional Practices

Over the last several decades the research on effective instructional practices has demonstrated that “not all instructional strategies are equal” (See Marzano et. al., 2001). A recent synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses provides clear guidance in this area (Hattie, 2009). While most educators understand these findings, school districts have had limited success at implementing them. Both Leithwood and Jantzi (2008), and Fullan (2008) recommend focusing on specific effective instructional practices as a part of the district’s improvement process. Fullan (2008) says we need “relentless consistency” in the use of effective “non-negotiable” practices.

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For increasing the performance of students with disabilities as part of district-wide improvement, to what degree did BEESS and its Strategic Plan partners:

	1	2	3	4
Make their primary role be about helping all school districts in their state improve the quality of instruction provided to all students?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Take steps to continually reduce fragmentation across BEESS offices and departments by requiring shared, cross agency work intentionally designed to increase the capacity of all districts to improve instructional practice and student learning?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Establish a statewide system of support intentionally designed to provide consistent, high-quality technical assistance to all districts in the state to improve instructional practice and student learning?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Evaluate the degree to which BEESS' actions are affecting district performance?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Recognize districts for system-wide improvement efforts that have a positive affect on all students and student groups?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please provide specific examples of the way quality instruction efforts were used to illustrate your ratings above.

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Key Practice 4: Implement Deeply

Most of us can identify a whole host of initiatives that were undertaken with great fanfare but then implemented poorly. So the first step of any change initiative must begin with the realization that without consistent, rigorous follow through, there will be limited progress. As Bossidy and Charan (2002) have stated “leadership without the discipline of execution is incomplete and ineffective” (p. 34). All too often we achieve limited success and blame this on the intervention, while the real problem is the lack of full implementation. Reeves (2006) documents the fact that we should not expect to achieve the outcomes identified in the research until we reach a 90% implementation level.

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For increasing the performance of students with disabilities as part of district-wide improvement, to what degree did BEES and its Strategic Plan partners:

	1	2	3	4
Limit the number of requirements to which districts must respond?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Support school districts to identify a limited number of goals for focusing all work, rather than multiple goals that are specific to initiatives, programs, or funding sources?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ensure that all BEES initiatives soliciting district involvement require responding districts to align proposed work with district-identified goals, rather than identify new or different goals?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Provide tools, products, and/or services that support districts in fully implementing identified instructional strategies?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please provide specific examples of the way implementation efforts were used to illustrate your ratings above.

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Key Practice 5: Monitor and Provide Feedback and Support

Even if we are successful in our implementation there must be a system in place to provide feedback. To develop the system we must first be clear about defining what the practices look like when they are being implemented well. This description can take the form of a rubric, checklist, or protocol, but it must clearly describe what the behavior looks like when it's being done well. Once these indicators are defined, there needs to be a monitoring and reporting schedule that informs everyone in the system as to the progress being made. The collection and reporting of these data serve to provide a feedback loop to the staff on the overall implementation level of the strategies and is described by Reeves (2006) as an inquiry process that is the most critical component of district and school continuous improvement. The second component includes the implementation of student progress indicators that have been collaboratively developed and scored by the staff.

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For increasing the performance of students with disabilities as part of district-wide improvement, to what degree did BEES and its Strategic Plan partners:

	1	2	3	4
Support and help districts to understand the importance of and relationship between monitoring for improvement and monitoring for compliance?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Support school districts in designing and using formative indicators and protocols/procedures for measuring district-wide implementation of focused improvement strategies and the effect of such implementation on student learning?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Provide tools, products, and/or services that support districts in monitoring the degree of implementation and its effects on student learning?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Provide tools, products, and/or services that support districts in providing feedback and differentiated support to schools and school-level teams and to teachers and teacher teams?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please provide specific examples of the way monitoring and feedback efforts were used to illustrate your ratings above.

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Key Practice 6: Inquire and Learn

While data help us prioritize and gauge progress, data-driven decision-making begins by asking fundamental questions (Reeves, 2002). At the grade-level, department, course, building, and district level, we need to be able to reflect on our collective and individual practice, answer important questions, and learn from the work we're doing. Important questions for teams to ask to support systems learning include the following:

- Where are the practices being implemented well?
- Why are they being successful?
- Where are the practices not being implemented well?
- Why are they being unsuccessful?

Response Scale

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For increasing the performance of students with disabilities as part of district-wide improvement, to what degree did BEES and its Strategic Plan partners:

	1	2	3	4
Evaluate BEES progress in supporting all districts to make improvements in adult professional practice and student learning?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Provide opportunities for collective reflection and learning among BEES staff?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Provide tools, products, and/or services that support districts in evaluating the degree of implementation of focused instructional strategies and its effects on changes in adult professional practice and student learning?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Recognize districts for continuous improvement in the learning of all students and student groups?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please provide specific examples of the way reflection and learning efforts were used to illustrate your ratings above.