

Operational Flexibility

District and School Improvement at American Institutes for Research (AIR)

AIR's District and School Improvement Center (<http://revivingschools.org/>) provides a smart, real-world, hands-on approach to school improvement that is based on a framework grounded in research and refined by practice. Instead of implementing a one-size-fits-all program, we identify the needs specific to districts and schools and provide guidance for modifying existing programming or starting fresh. District and School Improvement Center staff believe that sustained district and school turnaround and transformation can be achieved through building capacity at all levels of the educational system and developing a strong collaborative partnership among teachers, leaders, families, and communities.

Background

Research supports AIR's approach to developing and implementing a coherent systemic approach for school transformation where district and school leaders work closely to affect change for improved student outcomes (Brady, 2003; Cowan et al., 2012; Bryk, A. S., Sebring, P. B., Allensworth, E., Easton, J. Q., & Luppescu, S., 2010; Wallace Foundation, 2013). Leaders must have the operational flexibility to improve instructional practice, make crucial staffing decisions, infuse shared leadership throughout the system, engage external partnerships for support, and include stakeholders in shaping a culture where all that is fundamental to school improvement and improved student outcomes is realized (Cowan et al., 2012; Bryk, A. S., Sebring, P. B., Allensworth, E., Easton, J. Q., & Luppescu, S., 2010). Guiding and supporting district and school leaders' use of operational flexibility in response to the system's and community's contextual- and data-informed needs is a cornerstone of AIR services.

Service Description

AIR supports district leaders' use of operation flexibility to fully implement a comprehensive approach to substantially improve student achievement outcomes. Operational flexibility granted to leaders includes addressing staffing and recruiting, schedules/calendars/time, and budgets, as well as modifying existing programming to bring about purposeful and focused change. Our turnaround services enable leaders to leverage and build partnerships among teachers, families, and communities to develop whole-system capacity to positively affect student achievement. AIR's services strengthen leaders' skills in the use of operational flexibility by addressing the six major elements (e.g., leadership that drives change, educator effectiveness, coherent instructional guidance, student-centered climate, family and community engagement, and comprehensive diagnostics) that are critical to shaping a dynamic organizational culture where students thrive and succeed.

Value We Bring

AIR's technical assistance and guidance in the use of operational flexibility is designed to help districts and schools establish and sustain a well-integrated, coherent system that develops more effective teachers and leaders, improves climate and culture, is results driven, and improves educational outcomes for all students.