

Sustainability

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 on modifying the existing programming or starting fresh. District and School Improvement Center staff believes that sustained district and school improvement can be achieved through the development of a strong collaborative partnership throughout all levels of the educational system. Through our turnaround and transformation service work to engage and build partnerships among teachers, leaders, families, and communities, we assist schools in building whole-system capacity to positively affect student achievement.

Background

As research has shown, school improvement efforts that build the capacity of district and school staff, classroom teachers, and stakeholders have the greatest likelihood of being sustained (Evans-Andris, 2010; Kutash, Nico, Gorin, Rahmatullah, & Tallant, 2010). AIR's services are grounded in building district and school leaders' knowledge, skills, and capacity to use evidence-based processes and approaches to support the implementation and sustainability of effective school improvement efforts. Reaching sustainability with school improvement efforts requires time. It warrants a change in culture, building staffs' capacity for improved results, providing the right resources, monitoring and evaluating progress made, and gaining a commitment from all to improve student gains.

Service Description

AIR works directly with district and school staff to strengthen and improve organizational structures and utilize effective strategies and supports to bring long-term, results-driven school improvement to scale. We assist leaders in developing an intentional strategic plan and district framework of support for the school improvement work that is to be undertaken at all levels of the system. These services include supporting leaders with establishing monitoring systems to measure progress; being intentional about actions used for change; creating a sense of urgency for the work; engaging families and the community in the improvement process; communicating roles, responsibilities, and expectations for the work to be accomplished; and helping all understand the connection between improved instructional practice and sustainable student achievement.

Value We Bring

AIR's technical assistance and capacity-building services are designed to help districts and schools establish—and be both thoughtful and proactive about sustaining—a well-integrated system as the turnaround process unfolds, while keeping improved instruction and student outcomes as the focus.

Fred Clarke, East St. Louis High School, East St. Louis (Illinois) District 189, 618-623-7770, fred.clarke@estl189.com