



Moving California toward a statewide model for professional growth that *prioritizes teaching*

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Integrated Professional Learning Systems (IPLS) is an Improving Teacher Quality State Grant Program initiative. The leadership team acknowledges and thanks our 40 LEA partners (2014-2016) for demonstrating the value of building and resourcing professional growth systems for California's teachers.

Introduction

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As a university-based intermediary, Resourcing Excellence in Education (REEd) at UC Davis, provides leadership for the **Integrated Professional Learning Systems (IPLS)** initiative. Between 2014 and 2016, IPLS used funding provided by California’s Improving Teacher Quality State Grant Program to design and test a suite of pragmatic tools that were used to facilitate quality improvement and build instructional capacity of K-12 partners and, in turn, foster the professional growth of educators across learning contexts. As a component of this work, IPLS partners representing Local Education Agencies (LEA) engaged in a design-based, quality improvement process. Using research-based strategies known to lead to instructional excellence and student learning, IPLS aimed to ensure that support for teaching practices was an integral component of every evaluation and professional growth system in California. The main goals and actions of the initiative include:

IPLS partners representing Local Education Agencies (LEA) engaged in a design-based, quality improvement process.

GOAL ONE

Instructional practices needed for students to meet Common Core State Standards (CCSS) Initiative expectations are implemented broadly across participating LEA.

Actions:

- ✓ Support LEA by providing access to the **knowledge and associated expertise** needed to implement CCSS.
- ✓ Engage communities of teachers and instructional leaders in rapid cycles of inquiry as they implement high-leverage practices.

GOAL TWO

LEA cultivate the conditions that support and sustain continuous development of teachers’ individual and collective professional growth.

Action:

- ✓ Utilize an instructional capacity building framework as a way for LEA to **identify, generate, and implement the full spectrum of instructional resources** needed to ensure that the integrated professional learning system promotes the individual and collective growth of teachers.

GOAL THREE

LEA develop their own continuous improvement process and are ready to implement this process for ongoing improvement in teaching and learning.

Action:

- ✓ Engage LEA cross-role design teams in a continuous improvement process through structured **cycles of inquiry** as they design, test, and refine their integrated professional learning system for CCSS implementation.

Key Design Principles

The IPLS initiative was built upon three principles for designing and implementing integrated systems of professional growth: 1) target the instructional shifts needed for CCSS to provide a laser-like focus for instructional improvement; 2) cultivate local teacher leader community in driving instructional change; and 3) create the conditions necessary for continuous improvement in teaching and learning.

Principle 1: Target the instructional shifts needed for CCSS implementation. As articulated in the CCSS, we must focus on the improvement of a set of high-leverage instructional practices to have a significant impact on student outcomes (Grossman, 2012; Ball, 2013; Windshitl, 2013; Fogo, 2011; O’ Hara et. al, 2014). A “high-leverage practice” is an action or task central to teaching. Carried out skillfully, these practices increase the likelihood that teaching will be effective for students’ learning (Ball, 2013). Strategic Observation and Reflection (“SOAR”) Teaching Frames, developed with LEAs as part of the IPLS work on teacher evaluation and support systems, were used as a lever to effect change in classroom practice (O’Hara & Pritchard, 2016). This approach was predicated on providing teacher leaders and their peers with common language and a vision of effective instruction and the instructional shifts needed for CCSS implementation, as well as with time for deliberate practice of new instructional moves that align with this vision.

Principle 2: Cultivate local teacher leader community in driving instructional change. The second key design principle concerns the importance of local teacher leader community in driving instructional change. Research indicates that teacher collaboration and the sharing of expertise results in greater overall achievement than is accomplished by focusing on goals that are worked on individually or on different components (Gronn, 2002). Instilling a coaching/mentoring culture, whereby peers who receive high ratings and are recognized as knowing how to execute the best practices can share their knowledge with colleagues who require additional feedback and assistance in certain practice areas, corroborates a more collaborative model and allows effective teachers to pursue leadership positions (Berkowicz & Myers, 2014; Jackson & Bruegmann, 2009). Quartz et al (2008) examined teacher career paths, investigating retention and role changing among 838 teachers, and found that teachers were looking for positions in which they could grow professionally to make good teaching possible. Supportive colleagues, engaged principals, and sufficient resources best facilitate these environments. Teacher leadership positions not only encourage highly effective teachers to engage in coaching and mentoring their peers but also act to elevate the profession as a discipline of continual and collective growth (Curtis, 2013; Hunzicker, 2013).

Principle 3: Create the conditions necessary for continuous improvements in teaching and learning. The third design principle focuses on the importance of building the organizational infrastructure and conditions to grow, sustain, and spread the use of key practices that support individual and collective professional growth. Dunsmore and Nelson (2014) note that incentive or capacity-based approaches to school policy require collective actions in settings in which teacher leaders work with peers to build professional expertise around a common vision and that the goal of standards-based implementation “should be to get all educators to talk about

Research indicates that teacher collaboration and the sharing of expertise results in greater overall achievement...

good teaching, to observe teaching and refine it, and to agree on how to assess student learning” (p. 6).

Jaquith (2009, 2012) found that instructional capacity can be built through a generative cycle of resource identification and use. Jaquith’s model suggests that successful systems of professional growth requires attention to four dimensions of organizational change: (a) Increase in human resources: collective capabilities, instructional knowledge, experience, potential, and commitment; (b) Enacted professional growth strategies: coherent set of actions and tools aimed at fulfilling instructional mission and goals; (c) Cultivated professional culture: greater levels of collegiality, trust, and willingness to participate in continuous instructional improvement efforts; and (d) Supporting infrastructure: increase in reliance and use of integrated approaches for supporting professional growth and performance.

By intentionally making change in these four critical areas, there is a potential to accelerate improvements in teaching and learning across the educational system.

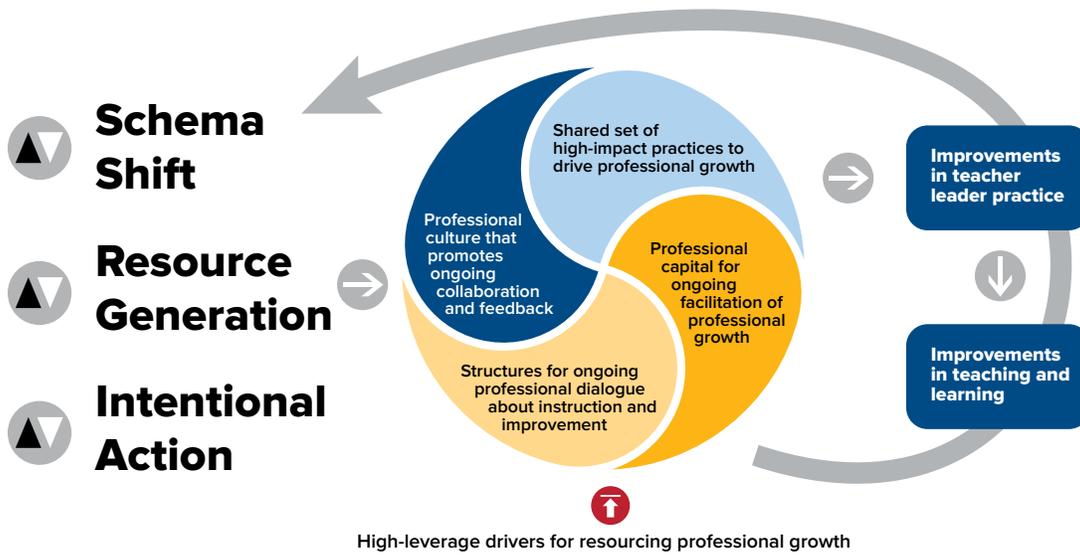
IPLS Theory of Change

The IPLS theory of change (see figure 1) was built on these design principles and begins with the premise that the role of education intermediaries is to help LEA enact practices that develop instructional capacity. This approach is three-fold: to support LEA in shifting their schema to one that fully embraces the role of teacher leadership in a system of professional growth (schema shift); to help LEA identify, generate, and effectively put into use the full spectrum of instructional resources that are needed for professional growth (resource generation); and to encourage intentional and strategic action through rapid cycles of learning and sense-making (intentional action). Change leaders (e.g, Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching) suggest that drivers of change direct attention to the underlying and longer-term factors that affect the institutional environment for reform. Research, coupled with the outcomes of the IPLS initiative, has shown that four drivers are essential to the implementation of these practices:

1. A shared set of high-impact instructional practices to drive professional growth.
2. Professional capital (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012) for on-going facilitation of professional growth.
3. Structures for on-going professional dialogue about instruction and improvement.
4. Professional culture that promotes on-going collaboration and growth.

Together, these four high-leverage drivers contribute to the implementation of effective integrated professional learning systems with educator evaluation and support system data at the center. These drivers have the potential to be cornerstones of California’s systems of professional growth, because they are actionable and achievable. By intentionally making change in these four critical areas, there is a potential to accelerate improvements in teaching and learning across the educational system.

Figure 1: IPLS Theory of Change



Implementation Approach

Based on our theory of change, the focus of our proposed work was to engage LEA design teams comprised of labor and management through a facilitated process where they planned, developed, and tested prototypes for continuous improvement in teaching and learning, several with the support of their County Office of Education (COE). The first phase of this process was to work with stakeholder groups to develop (1) a common vision of instructional excellence and (2) a design-based quality improvement process.

IPLS vision of instructional excellence: The intersection of the vision of professional teaching in the California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTP) and the expectations for teachers as reflective practitioners in the CCSS is plain to see; however, questions arose from participating LEAs around: What does the practice of a particular teacher at an initial level look like in engaging and supporting all students in learning (CSTP1) to develop arguments that support claims using relevant and sufficient evidence (CCSS Writing Anchor 1)? How does the practice of this particular teacher at the initial level differ from that of a highly developed teacher? How do these signature practices change as they emerge across the continuum of teaching? What do they look like concretely once they have developed through sustained reflective analysis and professional development? Our belief was that questions like these are at the heart of a successful integrated professional learning system.

Defining “professional teaching” by way of the CSTP and defining “student learning” according to the grade-by-grade expectations of the CCSS aligned CA ELA/ELD and Math Frameworks, the IPLS team worked with stakeholders to develop the Strategic Observation and Reflection (SOAR) Teaching Frames for Literacy and Mathematics. The SOAR Teaching Frames and associated rubrics index the stage of development of classroom teachers at four levels: no evidence, limited evidence, acceptable evidence, and strong evidence. These specific rubrics apply to California content standards grades TK-2 and grades 3-12.

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The SOAR Teaching Frames and associated rubrics arose from more than six years of research and development (see appendix for additional information). The practices articulated in the SOAR Teaching Frames (see figure 2) emerged from analysis of data from Delphi Panel studies of expert consensus on disciplinary literacy and mathematics instruction (Brisk & Proctor, 2012; Echevarria, Richards-Tutor, Chinn, & Ratleff, 2011; Grossman, Loeb, Cohen, & Wyckoff, 2013), video observations of classroom instruction (O’Hara, Pritchard, & Zwiers, 2014), existing instructional practice rubrics with established reliability and predictive validity (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2014; Danielson, 2013; Grossman, Cohen, & Brown, 2014; O’Hara et al., in press), and an extensive review of the research literature on effective literacy and mathematics instruction (Baker et al., 2014; Fisher, Frey, & Lapp, 2012; Nagy & Townsend, 2012; Uccelli, Galloway, Barr, Meneses, & Dobbs, 2015).

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Figure 2: SOAR High Impact Practices

SOAR High-Impact Practices



Design-Based Quality Improvement Process: In collaboration with a small group of key stakeholders, we developed a design-based quality improvement process (see figure 3) that draws upon three domains of theory: (1) Improvement Science; (2) Generative Cycles of Resource Identification and Use; and (3) Design Thinking.

We built on Bryk, et al's (June, 2013) work in the area of improvement science research and in particular, the use of Networked Improvement Communities. Networked Improvement Communities (NIC) are structured to help build research capacity and draw on the strength and expertise from across the network in conducting and using research to inform practice. We employed rapid cycles of inquiry used by the Carnegie Foundation for Advancement of Teaching and Learning in support of improvement science. These cycles offer ways for school districts to identify, generate, and put into use the full spectrum of resources that are needed to ensure that the use of research evidence for program design is sustainable and systemic, rather than isolated and sporadic.

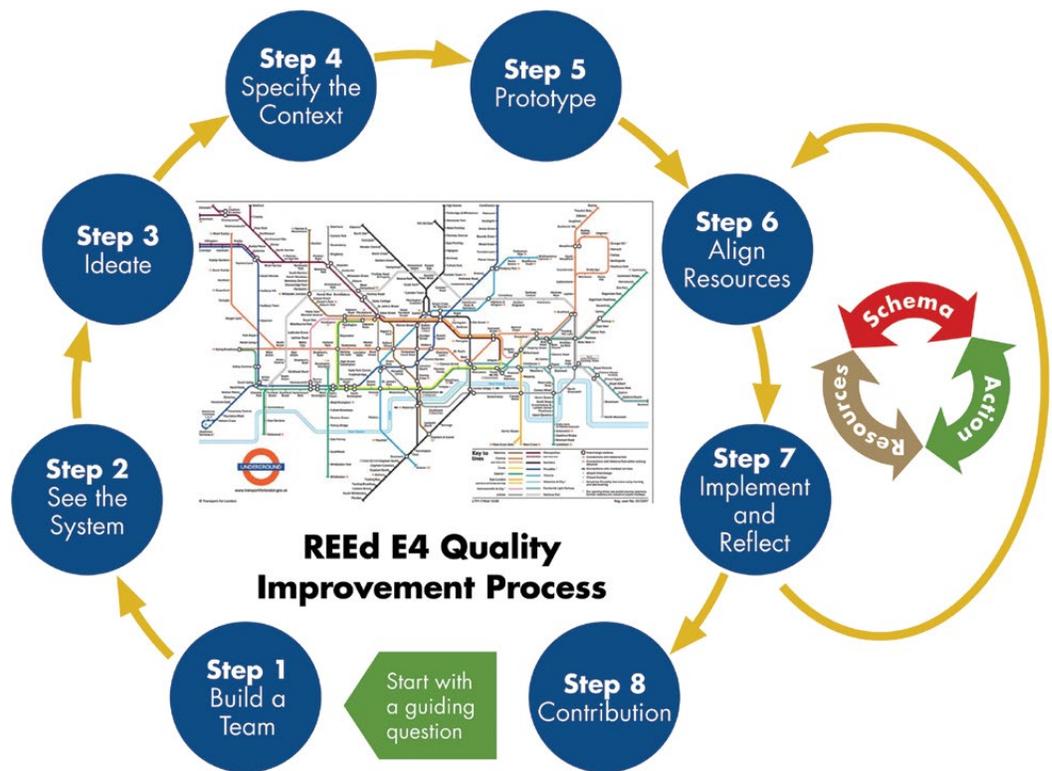
Our work also built on the Instructional Capacity Building (ICB) Framework (Jaquith, 2009; 2012), which assumes that “instructional resources reside both within and outside of an organization and that instructional resources are generated through their use, which necessitates being able to identify and use these resources” (2012, p.3). The ICB framework expands on Martha Feldman's theory in the area of Organizational Effectiveness. This framework offers a conceptual lens for understanding how organizations identify, generate, and implement the full spectrum of instructional resources needed to ensure that professional learning is systematic, well integrated, continuous, and sustainable. Instructional resources can be thought about in the following four broad and interdependent categories: human resources, enacted professional growth strategies, cultivated professional culture, and supporting infrastructure.

Finally, we drew on the methodology of design thinking which is a proven and repeatable problem-solving protocol that any business or profession can employ to achieve extraordinary results. Design thinking is linked to an improved future and to transforming existing conditions into preferred ones (Carroll et. al, 2010).

Having adopted a common vision of instruction and developed a Design-Based Quality Improvement Process, we engaged cross-role design teams from COEs and districts across California in this process with a targeted focus on fostering professional growth around the SOAR practices. The teams ranged in size from 5-8 people and included superintendents, principals, human resource personnel, teachers, coaches, and union representatives. Design teams developed and tested prototypes through cycles of inquiry and shared their learning through a network structure. Regardless of which point in the quality improvement process design teams began, the desired end result was improvements of instructional practices (as articulated in the SOAR Teaching Frames) and development of an integrated professional learning system and site-based conditions needed to support and sustain that system. We had a particular concern for how all levels of the system could stimulate the building of instructional capacity by creating the conditions conducive to learning at each level of the educational system. We were specifically interested in paying attention to the deliberate actions that principals, district leaders, instructional coaches, and teacher leaders could take in preparing for such conditions of learning through the identification and use of an array of existing resources.

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Figure 3: Design-Based Quality Improvement Process



Design teams were trained and calibrated around the SOAR Teaching Frames

IPLS Outcomes

REEd acted as the hub for facilitating the quality improvement process with the goal of gradually transferring the responsibilities for this process to county offices and districts over the course of the initiative. Across the initiative, we observed increased human resource capacity, professional growth strategies that were actionable and focused on the instructional shifts articulated in the SOAR Teaching Frames, shifts in professional culture, and organizational structures in place to support CCSS implementation, and teacher driven professional learning at both the county office and district level.

Specifically:

■ At the design team level:

- Design teams were trained and calibrated around the SOAR Teaching Frames; and have ability to assess where their schools are with respect to these shifts.
- Design teams developed the capacity to give feedback and coaching around these shifts.
- Design teams understood the continuous improvement process and the conditions needed to resource improvement in teaching and learning.
- Design teams developed and piloted a plan (co-constructed common aim statements, drivers, and metrics prototype) to pilot in year 2.

■ **At the school site level:**

- SOAR Teaching Frames practices were piloted in a selected sub-set of schools.
- There were shifts in instructional practices at those schools.
- Pilot schools engaged in cycles of inquiry and used that data to inform adjustments.
- Leadership developed a plan to continue to build capacity of teacher leaders and coaches to support professional growth around these practices.

■ **At the system level:**

- Design teams, together with key district/county players, developed a plan to increase human resource capacity, professional growth strategies that are actionable and focused on the instructional shifts needed for CCSS, shifts in professional culture, and put organizational structures in place to support CCSS implementation and teacher driven professional learning in all schools within their district/county.

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The following vignettes showcase these outcomes based on the experiences of two case study LEA, including a large urban school district and a small urban district.

CASE 1

CASE 1: Building Instructional Capacity in a Small Urban-Suburban District

Context: North School District is a small K-6 district in an urban-suburban area serving 2,500 students, 43% of whom are English learners and 92% are designated FRPM. The Superintendent has been in the district for 20 years, first as a teacher, then as principal, and now as Superintendent. The district is unusual in that most teachers stay in the district throughout their careers. The district has the typical issues of communication between management and labor and a typical bargaining process.

North's IPLS journey: The general consensus in the district was that the existing (negotiated) teaching evaluation tool could be improved. The belief was that the tool was not facilitating the desired improvements in teachers' practice. Several years ago, a principal had suggested an alternate tool, but the teacher's union said no, not necessarily because they didn't like the tool, but because it wasn't in the contract. The superintendent agreed not to pursue the issue, but he also told the union that the district would be revisiting the evaluation process in the coming years – the union agreed that this was a good plan. That opportunity came when REEd approached the district with a request to help demonstrate that evaluation can be used to empower teachers and help them grow professionally. The superintendent took the request to the union and his administrative team, and both agreed to serving as a pilot district in the IPLS initiative. Among the appealing parts of the request for the district was the opportunity to build a “home-grown” model that prioritized the professional growth of teachers.

CASE 1

“I think the story we tell begins with dissatisfaction with our current system. I think very often teachers and administrators would adhere to our process, which is pretty clearly described in our contract with the North Teacher’s Association. But it was not lending itself to improvement with teachers or even to the types of conversations that improve teaching practice. Everybody would jump through the hoops every year, but it wasn’t having an impact on our professionals, or on what was happening with our students. So when I had an initial conversation with the president of the Teacher’s Union, it was pretty easy to get her on board quickly with the idea that we wanted to look into a new system.” – Design team quote

North formed a core design team of teachers, principals, the human resources chief, union representation, and the superintendent and launched the process by spending time envisioning what an evaluation system that puts professional growth at the center might look like in their district. From there, the district worked with three other pilot districts where they were asked to develop a prototype and action plan based on a common aim statement: *By 2016, all evaluators in the district will have the capacity to observe and provide feedback for professional growth around a set of targeted, high-impact instructional practices.* During the next 12 months, the district team led the charge to pilot and test their prototype.

Drivers for change: North’s design team decided early on that one of the things that they needed to do was come up with some common language around effective instruction – a shared set of high-impact instructional practices. They wanted to define what strong teaching is about in the district.

“If we’re all going to have discussions about this, then we all need to be using the same type of language. That’s what led us to the SOAR Teaching Frame and that’s been the concrete focus of our work. The project has the very simple goal of professional collaboration and growth. Let’s all have a similar definition of what effective teaching looks like, then we can work out the details of professional growth from there.” – Design team quote

Once the team made the decision to focus work on the SOAR teaching practices, they began to determine how best to develop the professional capital needed for ongoing facilitation of professional growth around those practices. They formed a core group called the HIPsters (HIP-High Impact Practices), which included 25 participants of teachers, coaches and principals with representation from every school in the district. The HIPster team engaged with IPLS staff on professional learning and calibration on SOAR and engaged in cycles of implementation and feedback at each of their school sites.

“It really is about helping teachers grow professionally. We even talked about how we were going to change the name [of evaluators]. What are we going to call these people that are going to be helping the teacher? That was that moment where I felt like, and I think we all agree, we had this turning point of wow, we’re talking about something completely different. And we decided at that point actually to stop using the term evaluation, because we wanted the focus to be about professional growth and supporting teachers. It’s less about giving them a mark or a grade that’s evaluative, but more about having conversations in the process.”
– Design team quote

CASE 1

The district developed a new role called professional learning support teachers and began to build their capacity to offer support to peers around the SOAR practices.

“We received a private grant in the district this year that is funding now, what we call, professional learning support teachers. Other districts might call them coaches, but that’s the terminology we use. This group of teachers, now we have six of them, are supporting teachers in their professional growth. And what we’re excited about is that our model allows them to keep one foot in the classroom. They’re part time coach, part time in the classroom. That was very intentional on our part, because that allows them to be practicing these strategies in their classroom, and getting good at them, and working with each other, because they’re partner teachers, they’re sharing a classroom” – Design team quote

North’s design team quickly realized that open and regular communication was key to the success of the professional growth process, and as such, set about building a professional culture that would promote ongoing collaboration and feedback. The team communicated regularly with the entire district including human resources, the teachers union, and the school board.

“We have met multiple times and those meetings always end with: what’s our next step? We have brought a lot of people onboard and kept them involved by talking about this work at every union meeting that we have. There’s time for people to bring up questions and one of us is always there.” – Design team quote

The team also focused time on building a community of trust and strengthening relationships between, and among, teachers, administrators, management, and labor.

“We’re very much aware that we’re trying to build this community of trust. If you’re going to have teachers working with teachers to help them improve, then you want this atmosphere of trust. Full disclosure is really what we’ve strived for. The thing that’s the hardest thing to do is developing very open, transparent, ongoing communication, and building the trust and engendering respect amongst your colleagues.” – Design team quote

The North District, under the leadership of the design team, put a number of new structures in place to facilitate peer-peer collaboration and feedback on the SOAR practices. These structures were designed to foster ongoing professional dialogue about instructional improvement. For example, they put into place Professional Learning Community (PLC) at times during the school day where every teacher at a grade level is free (because an enrichment teacher is with their class). Facilitated by the professional learning support teachers, the PLCs allow teachers to get together and talk about the improvement process on a weekly basis.

“The PLC time is something that probably would not have been born, if not for the work that we were doing here. And it’s interesting, because at the bargaining table is where all of this often comes to reality. It was an idea that the district actually put it in writing first in their proposal, but the teacher’s union very much wanted to propose that as well. We came to the same place that it was something that needed to happen, something that was in the best interest of our teachers. Of course it was a no brainer to be able to agree to it at the bargaining table.” – Design team quote

CASE 1

The design team recognized the importance of moving the work forward with cross role teams to allow for multiple perspectives and voices in shaping the direction of the work.

“I think what we have learned as the design team is the power of being collaborative and bringing a variety of voices to the table. And I think, having a principal on the (design) team and our HR Chief on the team, and a variety of teachers from a variety of perspectives taught us that we would not be able to move forward unless we had those different perspectives. I have to say, we’ve had a scary moment or two, but we’ve learned to work together very well as a design team. I think that’s a great model for what we see it in the power of allowing others to collaborate.” – Design team quote

The North District case study illustrates the importance of the four drivers outlined in IPLS theory of change, both in terms of their importance as individual driver of change, but also in terms of the interconnectedness among the drivers.

“I think that school districts may be watching this and wondering -- we are already working on so many things with the new state testing, with the next generation science standards, with the common core standards which everybody’s still working on new language adopt, new ELA, ELD materials adoption, the framework. So many things are happening in our state right now. How do you make this all work together? We have strived for coherence in the district, and sometimes it feels like we’re being successful and sometimes it feels like we’re still trying to get it right, trying to find a way to make all of these things align. For us, having professional growth focused on the SOAR Teaching Frames makes a lot of sense. It is what we are doing to build a system of professional growth.” – Design team quote

Conclusions: The North School District example illustrates the idea that schema, actions, and resources are mutually influencing and gives some concrete examples of how instructional capacity was built in a small district. One major schema shift is illustrated when the design team realized that rather than focusing the work on designing a new and improved evaluation tool, they needed to focus on building a system of professional growth targeting a common vision of instruction. A second schema shift occurred when the team realized that developing and testing a prototype system through cycles of inquiry allowed them to move forward the work at a realistic pace, while still prioritizing the end goal and allowing for coherence. The third major schema shift came with the realization that all players within a district need to have regular opportunities to collaborate in the development of professional growth systems and that trust can be built through this collaborative effort. These schema shifts led the design team to take the actions articulated in the section above, and put into use new and existing resources for fostering the growth of all teachers in the district.

CASE 2

CASE 2: Building Instructional Capacity in a Large Urban School District

Context: Among the largest in the nation, South Unified School District (SUSD) enrolls over 600,000 students in kindergarten through 12th grade in Southern California. The district serves a high proportion of current English learners (EL) with 36% currently classified as EL.

SUSD's IPLS journey: The district's journey began with participation by SUSD teachers and coaches in a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) developed by Stanford University in collaboration with REEd at the University of California, Davis. The MOOC focused on a common vision of instruction targeting the needs of English learners and appealed to the Multilingual Education Department (MED) administrators who were interested in fostering professional growth across the district to implement the California ELA/ELD framework. The charge for the MED design team was to implement the ELD standards in tandem with the California Content Standards. Their approach to this was: build district awareness understanding and capacity; establish and expand collaboration; develop foundational resources; and align curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

"Our story began with a desire to move action research into classroom practice with the aim of improving instruction for English learners. We wanted to build the capacity in the district to meet the needs of our EL students and to focus on language as a driver for content learning."

– Design team quote

Together, SUSD teachers and coaches engaged in professional learning through participation in the MOOC, and in spring of 2016, they worked with REEd to develop and implement a SOAR fellowship program. The program was implemented with 70 district administrators over 5 Fridays and with 100 teacher-principal pairs over 5 Saturdays.

Drivers for change: The MED design team wanted to implement a common vision of instruction that would drive learning as articulated in the CA ELA/ELD framework and would also prioritize the importance of language for learning. They selected the SOAR Teaching Frames as their shared set of high impact instructional practices.

"We now have a tool [SOAR] that will help us to implement the teaching and learning framework. It will help us to be better observers and to give stronger feedback to our teachers. The rubrics will help teachers plan instruction and I can see how SOAR will help the district to foster teacher growth." – Design team quote

Once the team made the decision to focus work on the SOAR teaching practices, they began to determine how best to develop the professional capital needed for ongoing facilitation of professional growth around those practices. They developed curriculum support materials and unit plans aligned with the practices for different grade spans. In addition, they developed a suite of videos and online tools to support this work. They had principal and teacher pairs from schools within each local district participate in a SOAR fellowship program, and they also had district administrators and Title III coaches participate in their own SOAR professional learning to prepare them to support teachers in the implementation of the SOAR practices.

CASE 2

“We need to be all learning together, so we want to build the knowledge and skills of teachers, coaches and administrators together. We’ve done professional development around constructive conversations and we know that speaking and listening around the content area is important. SOAR furthers that work and will benefit my staff and it will benefit every child in my school – not just the ELs – every student.” – Administrator quote

The MED design team understood the importance of building a professional culture that would promote ongoing collaboration and feedback. They recognized that this professional culture included building relationships internally and also with external partners.

“We see the importance of building relationships to facilitate this work. We have focused on building teacher-principal reflective teams, relationships among administrators across different departments within SUSD, and building relationships with university intermediaries as we co-develop the professional growth work.” – Design team quote

They focused time on building a community of trust and strengthening relationships between, and among, teachers, administrators, management, and labor. They also recognized the importance of structuring the collaboration to allow teachers and leaders to have an equal voice.

“We see the importance of bringing in teacher-principal pairs to learn about SOAR together as reflective partners in the work. Working in reflective pairs, teachers and principals have had the same learning. They can see together what they need to strengthen and it also helps principals to think about how to provide the best support for teachers.” – Design team quote

The SUSD MED team put a number of new structures in place to facilitate peer-peer collaboration and feedback using the SOAR frames. These structures were designed to foster ongoing professional dialogue about instructional improvement. For example, they implemented the SOAR fellowship program, a coach book study, and cross role district administrator teams.

The SUSD case study illustrates the importance of the four drivers outlined in IPLS theory of change, both in terms of their importance as individual drivers of change, but also in terms of the interconnectedness among the drivers. Below is a graphic that was developed by the SUSD MED team near the end of the IPLS work.

CASE 2

Building Instructional Capacity



Adapted from: Jaquith, Ann, *Instructional Capacity: How to Build it Right*

Conclusions: The SUSD example illustrates the idea that schema, actions, and resources are mutually influential and gives some concrete examples of how instructional capacity was built in a large urban district. One major schema shift is illustrated when the MED team realized that bringing together principal-teacher pairs was central to building trust and strengthening dialogue around teaching and learning. A second schema shift occurred when the team realized that providing structured assignments that required participants to engage together in reflective cycles of inquiry helped to accelerate improvements in teaching practice. As with the North School District design team, the third major schema shift came with the realization that all players within a district need to have regular opportunities to collaborate in the development of professional growth systems and that trust can be built through this collaborative effort. This is a major undertaking in a large school district, but SUSD successfully utilized existing structures to facilitate deep collaboration among district administrators and school based teachers and leaders. These schema shifts led the design team to take the actions articulated above and translated into the identification and use of new resources for fostering the growth of all teachers in the district.

Implications for California

The IPLS initiative highlights the possibilities of endorsing capacity building as an approach for fostering the professional growth of educators across California’s education system. Using research-based strategies grounded in their local context, our LEA partners are well on their way to building their own path for ongoing improvements in teaching and learning.

IPLS illustrates that schema shifts, resource generation, and intentional actions are mutually influencing strategies that educational intermediaries could readily employ were they to adopt a capacity building role that shifts them from “experts” to “facilitators of improvement.” Intermediaries have the potential to help LEA identify resources, put them into use and fit them to a specific context. They are also well positioned to help LEA translate research into practical use, generate new knowledge, and to bring expertise to bear on LEA improvement work.

The SOAR Teaching Frames, provided a set of high-impact instructional practices articulated at a “grain-size” to foster professional growth.

A key component of the IPLS initiative was in the identification of four high-leverage drivers that we have found to be essential to the implementation of professional growth systems. It was, however, actually implementing those drivers in achievable ways, which was supported through the REEd design-based quality improvement process, that drove the success of the LEA. The quality improvement process provided a set of tools and a structure for building professional capital predicated on providing a common language and vision of effective instruction and the instructional shifts needed for CCCS implementation. One of the tools embedded in the process, The SOAR Teaching Frames, provided a set of high-impact instructional practices articulated at a “grain-size” to foster professional growth. The intermediary role was focused on cultivating the expertise of teachers and leaders and allowing the LEA to consider new and innovative structures for on-going professional dialogue about instruction and improvement, as well as to create the conditions necessary to building their own capacity for continuous improvement.

Core to the quality improvement process was attention to local context; while individual LEA adhered to similar steps, the results aligned with their local interests and needs. Our two vignettes provide an example of this. North School District’s journey began with an interest in improving their existing teacher evaluation tool and ended with taking concrete steps to build a district-wide system of professional growth in which a teacher evaluation tool was simply one resource. In contrast, SUSD’s initial participation was driven by an interest in implementing the California ELA/ELD framework to better support English learners. Along the way they found that the capacity building steps they were taking could be translated into the identification and use of new instructional resources for fostering the growth of all teachers in the district.

Perhaps our most significant finding is that California needs a statewide model of teacher professional growth that prioritizes teaching and support for instructional shifts. Research tells us that among school-related factors, teaching matters most when it comes to a student’s

academic performance. Yet, our work to support professional growth systems over the past two years has made it clear to us that the educational system itself does not always share that schema. Shifting this mindset will require creating opportunities for ensuring that educators at all levels of the system actually prioritize professional dialogue about instruction and about effective teaching practices, and the central role that teachers should play in driving this dialogue. Thought of as a problem of practice, one approach would be to pose a question that emerged as we began to think about how to balance teacher voice with administrator leadership and the needs of the LEA: *How might one balance an entity's autonomy and system coherence to foster professional growth?*

**How might
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SOAR Teaching Frames for Literacy

A nexus between the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTP) – 3rd-12th Grade, May, 2016.



<p>High-Impact Practices</p>	<p>Acquisition of Disciplinary Language</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide extended and supported opportunities for students to acquire and use features of disciplinary language • Use a variety of communication strategies to make target disciplinary language understandable 		
<p>Cross-Cutting Practices</p>	<p>Promoting a Culture of Disciplinary Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build norms of interaction • Establish high expectations and maintain the intellectual rigor of classroom activities 	<p>Fostering Metacognition for Disciplinary Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visibly enact metacognitive processes and/or strategies • Deconstruct metacognitive processes and/or strategies 	<p>Monitoring and Guiding Disciplinary Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor learning and adjust instruction, supports, and disciplinary tasks • Provide written and/or oral feedback during lessons
<p>Foundational Practice</p>	<p>Designing Instruction for Disciplinary Thinking and Understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set disciplinary learning targets that are aligned with ELA/Literacy CCSS and the target high-impact practice • Structure and connect tasks that support the learning targets • Design supports to help students meet disciplinary language demands 		

<p>High-Impact Practices</p>	<p>Disciplinary Communications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide multiple and supported opportunities for students to produce and fortify original disciplinary oral output appropriate to task, purpose, and audience • Provide extended and supported opportunities for students to produce and fortify original disciplinary written output appropriate to task, purpose, and audience 		
<p>Cross-Cutting Practices</p>	<p>Promoting a Culture of Disciplinary Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build norms of interaction • Establish high expectations and maintain the intellectual rigor of classroom activities 	<p>Fostering Metacognition for Disciplinary Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visibly enact metacognitive processes and/or strategies • Deconstruct metacognitive processes and/or strategies 	<p>Monitoring and Guiding Disciplinary Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor learning and adjust instruction, supports, and disciplinary tasks • Provide written and/or oral feedback during lessons
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A nexus between the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTP) – 3rd-12th Grade, May, 2016.



<p>High-Impact Practices</p>	<p>Disciplinary Discussions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build disciplinary conversation skills • Use a variety of communication strategies to make target disciplinary language understandable 		
<p>Cross-Cutting Practices</p>	<p>Promoting a Culture of Disciplinary Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build norms of interaction • Establish high expectations and maintain the intellectual rigor of classroom activities 	<p>Fostering Metacognition for Disciplinary Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visibly enact metacognitive processes and/or strategies • Deconstruct metacognitive processes and/or strategies 	<p>Monitoring and Guiding Disciplinary Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor learning and adjust instruction, supports, and disciplinary tasks • Provide written and/or oral feedback during lessons
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<p>High-Impact Practices</p>	<p>Disciplinary Perseverance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build skills that foster disciplinary perseverance including setting long-term goals, accepting ambiguity, sustaining stamina, and adjusting approaches • Provide and support complex and extended tasks that require intellectual rigor, iterative learning, and generation of new thinking 		
<p>Cross-Cutting Practices</p>	<p>Promoting a Culture of Disciplinary Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build norms of interaction • Establish high expectations and maintain the intellectual rigor of classroom activities 	<p>Fostering Metacognition for Disciplinary Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visibly enact metacognitive processes and/or strategies • Deconstruct metacognitive processes and/or strategies 	<p>Monitoring and Guiding Disciplinary Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor learning and adjust instruction, supports, and disciplinary tasks • Provide written and/or oral feedback during lessons
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<p>High-Impact Practices</p>	<p>Disciplinary Thinking Processes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage students in an analysis of text to examine how the language features of disciplinary thinking processes work together to convey meaning and/or purpose Provide and support multiple opportunities for students to develop and use a repertoire of thinking processes appropriate to task, purpose, and audience 		
<p>Cross-Cutting Practices</p>	<p>Promoting a Culture of Disciplinary Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build norms of interaction Establish high expectations and maintain the intellectual rigor of classroom activities 	<p>Fostering Metacognition for Disciplinary Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visibly enact metacognitive processes and/or strategies Deconstruct metacognitive processes and/or strategies 	<p>Monitoring and Guiding Disciplinary Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor learning and adjust instruction, supports, and disciplinary tasks Provide written and/or oral feedback during lessons
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<p>High-Impact Practices</p>	<p>Disciplinary Uses of Evidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foster students' ability to analyze multiple pieces of textual and oral evidence for the criteria of accuracy, relevancy, and purposefulness Provide and support a variety of opportunities for students to identify and use multiple pieces of evidence to develop and support claims in disciplinary writing and speaking 		
<p>Cross-Cutting Practices</p>	<p>Promoting a Culture of Disciplinary Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build norms of interaction Establish high expectations and maintain the intellectual rigor of classroom activities 	<p>Fostering Metacognition for Disciplinary Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visibly enact metacognitive processes and/or strategies Deconstruct metacognitive processes and/or strategies 	<p>Monitoring and Guiding Disciplinary Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor learning and adjust instruction, supports, and disciplinary tasks Provide written and/or oral feedback during lessons
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