Evaluation of Dynamic Impact in Worcester County Public Schools

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Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:
Evaluation of Dynamic Impact in Worcester County Public Schools

The purpose of the present study was to evaluate administrator perceptions of the implementation of Dynamic Impact (DI) in Worcester County Public Schools (WCPS) by Johns Hopkins' Center for Technology in Education (CTE). As described by CTE, DI builds the capacity of school districts to form and sustain high-performing teams using several protocols to guide their work together as they implement school improvement plans.

This descriptive study collected and analyzed interview data to document district and school administrators' perceptions of DI as implemented in WCPS, including the following:
- Motivations and hopes for using DI to develop and implement school improvement plans,
- Perceptions of stakeholder engagement in DI and its protocols,
- Perceptions of the impact of DI, and
- Overall reactions to DI.

Senior administrators at WCPS were asked to participate in interviews, as were principals of schools in the Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) program. Data collection took place during the spring semester of 2023.

Perceptions of Stakeholder Engagement in DI and Its Protocols

Those interviewed described active involvement by members of DI teams in identifying root causes, developing action plans and implementing them with fidelity, and monitoring progress. They also described broad stakeholder participation in implementing the DI action steps, though some participants acknowledged that not all staff were as invested in the overall plans as were the DI team members. Participants described adherence to the UNITED, ROOT, and CHANGE protocols, although one person identified room for growth in the implementation of CHANGE. No participants raised any concerns about the value of any of the protocols, even if they had initially wondered whether some aspects of the protocols were more involved than was necessary. Some participants noted that aspects of the DI process were also influencing collaboration and efforts beyond DI as well.

Perceived Impact on Teacher Practices, School Improvement Process, and Student Outcomes

All participants indicated that DI supported fidelity or integrity of implementation of programs and plans. DI led to clear expectations for implementing a manageable set of action steps and tracking specific data, and the clarity and focus were seen as

contributing to stakeholder buy-in. All participants appreciated that the DI process was a meaningful guide throughout the year, rather than a static school improvement plan document that was developed and then set aside. While the relatively recent launch of DI and the disruptions of Covid made it difficult to draw conclusions about DI's impact on student outcomes, all participants pointed to specific promising data related to student improvement.

Motivations and Hopes for DI and Overall Reactions to DI

Overwhelmingly, participants reacted favorably to DI. As hoped for, it contributed to engaging a broad group of stakeholders to develop a dynamic plan that helped schools realize their visions and improve student outcomes. Although DI required a considerable investment of time, no participant evinced any doubt that this time was valuable.

Conclusion

Overall, findings suggest that school and district administrators see DI as a productive school improvement process that engages a broad array of stakeholders, examines root causes of issues, develops action plans to support the implementation of evidence-based practices and implements the practices with fidelity, and engages in ongoing progress monitoring and adjusting plans as needed. Notably, unlike school improvement plans that are overwhelmingly complicated static documents created for compliance reasons and then set aside and forgotten, the DI plan serves as a dynamic guide throughout the year to bring focus to the school improvement process. Participants indicated that the DI protocols, as well as the CTE staff, supported the effective implementation of the process. Although it was too early to determine conclusively the relationship between DI and improvement of student outcomes, participants cited specific examples of improvement in student data and also reported confidently on teachers' increased attention to implementing action steps with fidelity.

Input from the district and school administrators interviewed suggests the following potential opportunities for further strengthening DI:

- Building on the broad commitment to implementing action steps by engaging stakeholders beyond the core mathematics, literacy, and safety teams in the plan overall.
- Strengthening teams' data literacy and ability to engage in root cause analysis and ensuring that action plans arise from root cause analysis.
- Addressing the difficulty in scheduling adequate meeting time.

Evaluation of Dynamic Impact in Worcester County Public Schools

The purpose of the present study was to gather data related to the second-year implementation of Dynamic Impact in Worcester County Public Schools (WCPS) in Maryland. As part of the Center for Technology in Education's (CTE) Professional Learning initiative, CTE developed and implements DI to engage educators in a "team-directed continuous improvement process" involving root cause analysis, implementation of evidence-based interventions, and monitoring of effectiveness. In brief, as described by CTE, DI builds the capacity of school districts to form and sustain high-performance teams using several protocols to guide their work together as they implement school improvement plans (SIPs). As shown in Figure 1, teams that engage in DI are expected to have improved collaboration and achieve goals, resulting in selected programs and practices being implemented with fidelity, with an ultimate goal of improving student outcomes. The elements of DI are further discussed below.

Figure 1

Expected Outcomes of Dynamic Impact
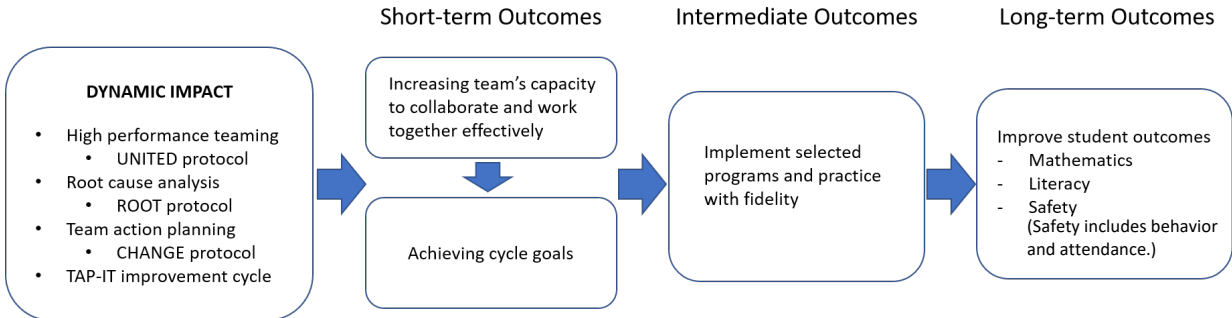
DI is a team-based continuous improvement approach that consists of (a) high performance teaming; (b) root cause analysis; (c) team action planning; and (d) the TAP-IT (Teams, Analyze, Plan, Implement, and Track) Improvement Cycle. Teams use three protocols to support these elements:

- **UNITED protocol.** The UNITED protocol is intended to foster effective teaming and collaboration so that teams reach shared goals and realize the team mission. A significant feature of UNITED is that team members rotate roles (e.g., facilitator, timekeeper, notetaker) at every meeting so that all team members are invested, and all their voices are heard.

- **ROOT protocol.** The ROOT protocol incorporates well-defined, precise steps to examine various types of data, discover an underlying root cause of a problem, and identify appropriate, realistic strategies for improvement. It also includes a team-directed resource, called the Triangle Technique, which is

designed to help team members efficiently sift through "tangled data analysis" to verify the source of a problem and select specific evidence-based practices that are predicted to address it.

- **CHANGE protocol.** The CHANGE protocol outlines team-directed procedures for developing straightforward, year-long action plans, and it includes a chart for identifying data sources in order to track progress related to implementation and student outcome goals. The intent is for all team members to work together to delineate specific activities that provide teachers sufficient support to employ evidence-based practices successfully so that targets and goals are reached, and substantial student progress is realized.

Teams, Analyze, Plan, Implement, and Track (TAP-IT) Improvement Cycle.

Each school year, participating DI teams go through three TAP-IT Continuous Improvement Cycles. Going through multiple cycles over the course of a year is intended to ensure that the SIP remains in use and relevant throughout the school year and that plans are adjusted as appropriate.

Using the DI process, most WCPS schools formed three DI teams: one focused on literacy, another on mathematics, and the third on safety, which encompassed attendance and behavior. Each team developed a school improvement plan that included research-based intervention(s). CTE provided each team with written feedback and monthly support calls. The teams set goals for student outcomes, implementation fidelity, and team performance for each cycle and for the year. At the end of each cycle, teams evaluated whether or not the cycle goals were achieved and what adjustments might need to be made to the action plan.

To support teams in using DI, CTE provided several ongoing professional learning resources and experiences:

- **Digital workbook.** A digital workbook provided guidance and templates to help structure teams' work together.

- **In-person professional development.** At several district-wide professional development sessions during the year, CTE trainers built participants' understanding of the purpose and usage of DI protocols and practices. In 2022-23, the in-person trainings were attended by members of the mathematics teams and representatives from the literacy and safety teams. The representatives relayed their learnings to other members of the literacy and safety teams at their schools.

- **Monthly coaching calls.** CTE coaches provided support on preparing for the upcoming team meetings in coaching calls with school administrators and the team members whose turn it was to serve as team facilitator.

According to CTE, WCPS adopted DI as the model for school improvement in the 2021-22 school year, after some departments had used CTE's TAP-IT protocol for several years.

We report on the results of an evaluation of the implementation of DI in WCPS during the 2022-23 school year, based on interviews with two district administrators and two principals. Research questions addressed by the study are:

1. What are leaders' reactions to DI in terms of the impact on
    a. Stakeholder engagement?
    b. Teacher practice?
    c. The school improvement process?
2. What are leaders' overall reactions to DI in WCPS?

Method

The initial plan for this descriptive study called for interviews with all members of the WCPS "Core Four" (four senior administrators charged with oversight of academics and student outcomes), the superintendent, and a member of the school board, for a total of six interviews. However, because of the demands on school administrators' and board members' schedules and difficulty scheduling an adequate number of interviews, the participant pool was expanded to include principals of WCPS schools considered by the State of Maryland to be Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) Schools. Participants were invited to participate in interviews during the fall 2022 and spring 2023 semesters, and all interviews were conducted during the spring 2023 semester.

The research design for the current study is presented below, followed by descriptions of participants, procedure, and analytic approach.

Participants

During the 2022-23 school year, WCPS implemented DI across all 14 schools, including elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools. WCPS serves students in Worcester County, in eastern Maryland. Worcester County has a population of about 52,000, according to Data USA.[1] According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)[2], WCPS serves approximately 6,800 students, of whom 80% are White, 13% are Black or African American, 4% are Hispanic or Latino, 1% are Asian,

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[1] https://datausa.io/
[2] https://nces.ed.gov/

and 2% are two or more races. NCES indicates that 13.4% of students come from families with income below the poverty level, while the median household income for those with children in public school is $81,830. According to the most recent Maryland State Report Card, 2022, for students overall WCPS met the annual target for the percent of students proficient in English language arts but did not meet the target for percent proficient in math or for the four-year graduation rate. The previous Report Card, for 2019, indicated that the district had met all three targets.

CTE invited all members of the Core Four, the superintendent, one board member, and both principals of TSI schools to participate in individual interviews. Two members of the Core Four and both principals participated.

Instrumentation and Analytical Approach

Two district administrators (members of the Core Four) and two TSI principals participated in semi-structured individual interviews in April or May of 2023. Interviews were conducted over Zoom and lasted about 30 to 40 minutes. Interview topics included the following:

- Motivations for selecting DI and/or hopes for DI
- Perceived differences of DI from other school improvement processes
- Stakeholder engagement in DI
- Changes in teacher practices and/or student outcomes associated with DI
- Stakeholders' use of UNITE, ROOT, and CHANGE protocols and their impacts
- Time constraints in relation to DI and school improvement
- DI's impact on the school improvement process
- Overall reactions to DI

See the Appendix for the interview protocol.

Interview transcripts were analyzed using thematic and descriptive coding, and findings were synthesized across all interviews in relation to the research questions.

Results

The following sections present the findings derived from the data collection activity described above. First, we present findings in relation to stakeholder engagement in DI, DI's impact on teacher practices, and DI's impact on the school improvement process, as well as student outcomes. Next, we present findings in relation to overall reactions to DI, as well as the motivations for or hopes in using DI.

Perceptions of Stakeholder Engagement in DI and Its Protocols

All participants described broad stakeholder engagement in implementing the plan. However, one member of the Core Four acknowledged that some staff were "still sort of in the check-the-box mindset" and had not yet engaged in the "mindset shift" "to understand that school improvement is not just simply a series of steps." Both principals explained that some teachers were focused solely on implementation. As one principal explained, they "don't have the big picture," and it is hard to get them engaged beyond "What do you want me to do?" The other principal explained that the DI implementation team obtained and tracked data "so it's one less thing you [teachers] have to be responsible for," thereby allowing other teachers to "focus on carrying out the activity steps and really making a difference in the classroom with [their] students." The second principal described a SIP rubric all teachers completed to evaluate the alignment of the elements within the plan, as well as the alignment of actual school practices to the plan; this principal also explained that one Professional Learning Community (PLC) each month focused on DI to create an opportunity for all teachers to provide feedback. Participants were also asked about stakeholder engagement in each of the protocols, and their responses are summarized below.

UNITED. With regard to engagement in the UNITED protocol, all participants reported that DI teams used the UNITED protocol, and all participants indicated that they saw value in the protocol.

Two participants reported that UNITED practices are used beyond DI teams. One member of the Core Four noted that 5-3-1 "has become standard practice" across the district "as a mechanism for reaching consensus," and a principal recounted a recent experience in a non-DI meeting when participants initiated the use of 5-3-1 to reach a decision.

Two participants indicated that UNITED fostered broader involvement in school improvement. A principal explained that with DI, it is not just one or two people identifying the root cause and making the plan, but rather a larger group. A member of the Core Four explained that UNITED helps ensure groups are "accountable to themselves."

Two participants commented on the value of reviewing their vision and performing other teaming elements at meetings throughout the year. One person who had initially thought the time invested in teaming was wasted later recognized value in "co-constructing" their vision and beliefs and returning to them throughout the year. Another person saw value in teams' "refresh[ing]" their awareness of their mission, vision, and teaming principles to prepare them to address action steps.

One member of the Core Four noted the value of clarity about expectations for follow-up after each meeting, commenting, "Multiple people are accountable for specific things within a group, and ... those accountability metrics are identified. ... It's clear at the end of every meeting who is going to do what." This participant also noted the

value of scheduling all the meetings for the year in advance so that meetings actually occurred with the intended frequency.

ROOT. All participants reported that stakeholders use ROOT consistently, and all evinced support for the protocol. Two participants commented that a benefit of the ROOT protocol is that it elicits multiple people's insights. One member of the Core Four said that ROOT "gets everybody to be able to put all their thoughts down, and they feel … like they have a say. … They feel like they've been heard. … And when you let them be heard and then they are helping come up with that root cause, they feel like they're part of a team." A principal reported that because ROOT engages the entire team in identifying themes and discerning root causes, it "help[s] teachers not take it so personally" when a change they need to make is identified. It is not that a single administrator is expecting a change from a single teacher. Instead, with ROOT, the data as collaboratively analyzed points the way toward a particular action step. Further, the focus is not on a particular teacher, but rather student data and what action steps the team has identified for improving it. This principal acknowledged that initially, using ROOT to examine data was "uncomfortable" because "it was admitting there's a problem." But over time, ROOT created a "safe place."

Both members of the Core Four who were interviewed noted that they had engaged in root cause analysis prior to the introduction of ROOT. One contrasted ROOT with the Five Whys and the Fishbone techniques of data analysis and found ROOT preferable because it was simpler to use. Relatedly, a principal noted that schools "always … say data drives instruction, but sometimes we can have too much data, and we kind of don't know where to go or what to use." Unlike other methods for analyzing data and root causes, they felt DI kept practitioners from being overwhelmed because it "really pinpoints what data we are going to use to form our goals."

One member of the Core Four noted that with ROOT, their teams looked at varied data, including multiple metrics and data on subgroups. Another member of the Core Four appreciated that the ROOT protocol prompts teams to focus on what is within their control. The person commented, "It's very easy in education to identify all the ills of society and how they negatively impact education. And they absolutely do. But ultimately, it's beyond our control. We have to focus on what is within our locus."

CHANGE. All participants indicated they saw the CHANGE protocol as valuable, although one participant felt that of all the protocols, the district had the most room for improvement with regard to implementation of CHANGE. Three participants commented favorably on the cycles. One member of the Core Four appreciated that the three cycles and the monthly meetings prompted teams to "take stock" of whether they were implementing the plan as intended, rather than making a plan and then setting it aside. This person commented,

In the past, ... you set your school improvement plan, maybe you submitted them to the central office by October. They gave you some feedback. Maybe in May or June, you came back and looked at it. Or you just started the whole process again.

Another participant felt the three cycles led teams to set goals of manageable scope: "We're not trying to change the world in one cycle. We're trying to really focus in and pick some ideas that we want to focus on." This person, too, contrasted DI with previous school improvement models, saying, "Before, we just had binders and binders and binders of action steps, and just plans and plans and plans," whereas with DI, they focus on "What are the action steps that we want to put in place for this cycle? ... It's really forced us to narrow."

One principal reported that because of CHANGE, the school is implementing their plans with fidelity and using research-based practices. The person gave the example of making an action plan that called for the school to develop a rubric, but then they were reminded by CTE of the importance of research-based practices, so they found an existing rubric that would serve their purposes.

The participant who felt there was room for improvement in the implementation of CHANGE reported that sometimes teams conduct root cause analysis but do not base their action plan on the root causes identified. Instead, "everybody ... has what they want to implement already in place."

Perceived Impact on Teacher Practices

As was also noted in relation to stakeholders' usage of the CHANGE protocol, all participants mentioned that DI supported fidelity or integrity of implementation. One member of the Core Four pointed out that when schools implemented a program or practice with integrity, they could determine whether or not it had the intended effect. The other member of the Core Four who was interviewed echoed this assessment, saying, "You really can't attribute outcomes to anything if you don't have ... fidelity data." When asked the mechanism by which DI led to greater integrity of implementation, one member of the Core Four referenced attention to implementation science and a cultural shift. Another indicated that teachers experienced more accountability because central office staff and principals attended to implementation fidelity on walk-throughs and that teachers were more invested in implementing with fidelity because of their understanding of the larger context of the plan.

Relatedly, a principal noted that the clear and narrow focus of DI's action steps contributed to implementation fidelity and staff "buy-in," explaining, "With our staff ... we were able to very much narrow in on this is what you need to do, this is what you need to track." The principal went on to say:

> *Their time is so valuable, and they have so much that they have to
> do. So, if I'm asking them to track ten pieces of data, it just
> becomes ... one more thing to do. But if I'm saying this is what
> we're going to focus on ... and I only want you to track this, then
> they're more willing, the buy-in is more there ... and they have a
> better understanding of why we're tracking it and they can relate it
> better to the goal.*

The other principal also noted that DI led to focus. This principal reported that DI led to increased attention to setting goals with students and talking with them about their data and to providing effective Tier 2 and Tier 3 instruction.

Perceived Impact on School Improvement Process and Student Outcomes

All participants indicated that DI was a dynamic school improvement process or system, rather than a static school improvement plan that did not actually influence ongoing practices. One member of the Core Four commented on the experience of creating a school improvement plan in the past:

> *[It had] always been something ... that you've had to do, but ... I
> don't think it was alive ... It was almost like, here over to the side,
> this is something that we have to turn in ... there's a deadline ... we
> have to get this done. But [now with DI] it's alive, and it's
> something that's constantly visited. And it's kept alive from the
> meetings and the cycles.*

This person also noted that stakeholders were surprised and relieved to have the autonomy to adjust their cycle goals as needed based on learnings and results over the course of the year. The other member of the Core Four commented that DI had made the school improvement process more "professionalized" and more of a "system," with ongoing attention to root causes, action plan implementation, and results.

Both members of the Core Four who were interviewed and one of the principals commented on DI's positive impact in creating opportunities for sharing across schools. One member of the Core Four said, "I think there's a lot that we can learn when we get out of our silos" and referred to the "safe space to start talking about ... this is where my school is struggling." This person felt that DI was "starting to take the stigma out of data. ... It doesn't mean you're a bad school or a bad staff. ... It just means that the students are struggling, and we want to figure out why." They went on to say, "that is probably the largest shift that we're trying to make is ... getting away from that punitive model and really into that growth mindset. ... Data is not bad or good—it just is ... we have to figure out what to do with it." The principal who noted the benefits of sharing across schools reported that this enabled schools to learn about practices that had been effective in other schools and consider trying them in their own schools.

Given the relatively short amount of time DI has been in use and the disruptions of Covid, it was difficult for those interviewed to discern confidently the impact of DI on student outcomes. Nevertheless, each participant provided at least one example of quantitative improvement. For instance, one participant noted some improvement in i-Ready scores, two described improvements for specific subgroups, and the other noted that their school had decreased the number of students in Tier 3 while the overall school population had increased.

Motivations and Hopes in Using DI

Participants were asked about their motivations for selecting DI as a school improvement model where applicable or (for those who did not influence the adoption of DI) their hopes for DI. One person recounted having been aware of some departments' use of the TAP-IT protocol, developed by CTE, which later was expanded to become DI. This person saw TAP-IT as leading to more efficient team meetings and the development of and adherence to action plans that were connected to goals, and the person believed DI could have similar effects overall. Both principals hoped that DI would benefit their school. One explained, "What I really wanted DI to do was to help us streamline, to help us make our action plans achievable ... something that would also increase achievement overall for the school." The other commented, "I was hoping that it would already tie in to … what our vision is for the school, and it wasn't just something else that we had to do to check the box."

Overall Reactions to DI

All participants' reactions to the DI process and staff were positive. As noted above, participants appreciated that DI was a dynamic process guiding their ongoing work and leading to measurable progress, rather than a static plan developed to comply with expectations but not yielding meaningful benefits. Participants also appreciated the way that DI engaged numerous stakeholders and ensured that schools faithfully implemented their plans, monitored progress, and adjusted plans as needed.

During interviews, participants contrasted DI with other school improvement models. One member of the Core Four explained:

> I think probably the biggest difference is that DI really spends a lot of time and energy … reminding everybody that … ultimately, when we're trying to get things to change, we have to understand why they're a problem to begin with, why the solutions we think are going to work, and then are we actually implementing the solution and then actually seeing what works. … Most of the time [with processes besides DI] folks just throw action steps at a problem.

The other member of the Core Four felt that when used appropriately, DI charged all team members with responsibility for data, while otherwise only the principal or a small group of people tended to be "the owners of the data." Two participants expressed appreciation for the three DI cycles each year, and one contrasted the DI cadence with the seven-year plans of the past: "I remember having just shelves and shelves and shelves and shelves of binders ... and we kind of got lost in all the pieces of it." This principal went on to say that when they partnered with CTE and "narrowed in" and "laser focused," "that's when we started to see progress." Two participants also felt that unlike some other school improvement processes or root cause analysis tools, DI was accessible and doable for all stakeholders.

Two participants noted the impact of CTE staff in ensuring the rigor of the process or in guiding and resourcing the DI teams. One of these participants appreciated having people outside the school aware of the school's work; this person valued their serving as thought partners, but also simply recognizing the school's efforts and accomplishments from an outside vantage point. One participant expressed appreciation that DI was "very structured" and that "it provides focus."

One participant identified areas for improvement: first, providing increased training on data literacy, with direct instruction, modeling, and explicit guidance about using data and engaging in root cause analysis; and second, DI teams ensuring that their action plans arise from their root cause analysis.

Participants were asked whether DI streamlined their school improvement efforts and how issues of time influenced their work. All participants commented on the considerable time required for DI and the difficulty of finding meeting time, with both principals noting that the negotiated agreements limited the frequency and duration of meetings they could require teachers to attend. One principal commented that it has also become harder to secure substitute teacher coverage since the pandemic. Nevertheless, one member of the Core Four identified the time invested in DI as "time worth taking." The other acknowledged, "Time is always an issue, and it always will be in education" and reported that DI takes as long as other school improvement processes. However, this person saw DI as an investment rather than an add-on because instead of being "on a shelf" like other school improvement plans, it is "alive." A principal also echoed this sentiment that DI was used in an ongoing way rather than shelved. Both principals shared their ideas for scheduling DI work more strategically for the next year, and none of the participants indicated that the time required for DI was excessive or wasted.

Participants were asked how DI interacted with TSI efforts. Two participants indicated potential benefits of having a TSI DI team next year (along with the mathematics, literacy, and safety DI teams), rather than having TSI and DI as separate efforts. One of the principals commented that the state identifies the root cause for schools in the TSI program. A member of the Core Four pointed out that for TSI, as for

DI, it is essential to "understand the issue" and "implement action steps to improve the outcomes ... and it has to be evidence-based."

Discussion

The present study explored school and district administrators' perceptions of the implementation of DI in WCPS. This study included interviews with school and district administrators to understand their motivations and hopes for using DI as the school improvement plan, perceptions of stakeholder engagement in DI and its protocols, perceptions of the impact of DI, and overall reactions to DI. In the section below, we synthesize and interpret the results of the study.

Perceptions of Stakeholder Engagement in DI and Its Protocols

Those interviewed described active involvement by members of DI teams in identifying root causes, developing action plans and implementing them with fidelity, and monitoring progress. They also described broad stakeholder participation in implementing the DI action steps, though some participants acknowledged that not all staff were as invested in the overall plans as were the DI team members. Participants described adherence to the UNITED, ROOT, and CHANGE protocols, although one person identified room for growth in the implementation of CHANGE. No participants raised any concerns about the value of any of the protocols, even if they had initially wondered whether some aspects of the protocols were more involved than was necessary. Some participants noted that aspects of the DI process were also influencing collaboration and efforts beyond DI as well.

Perceived Impact on Teacher Practices, School Improvement Process, and Student Outcomes

All participants indicated that DI supported fidelity or integrity of implementation of programs and plans. DI led to clear expectations for implementing a manageable set of action steps and tracking specific data, and the clarity and focus were seen as contributing to stakeholder buy-in. All participants appreciated that the DI process was a meaningful guide throughout the year, rather than a static school improvement plan document that was developed and then set aside. While the relatively recent launch of DI and the disruptions of Covid made it difficult to draw conclusions about DI's impact on student outcomes, all participants pointed to specific promising data related to student improvement.

Motivations and Hopes for DI and Overall Reactions to DI

Overwhelmingly, participants reacted favorably to DI. As hoped for, it contributed to engaging a broad group of stakeholders to develop a dynamic plan that helped schools realize their visions and improve student outcomes. Although DI

required a considerable investment of time, no participant evinced any doubt that this time was valuable.

Conclusion

Overall, findings suggest that school and district administrators see DI as a productive school improvement process, with interviewees mentioning several key strengths of using DI:

- Engaging a broad array of stakeholders,
- Examining root causes of issues,
- Developing action plans to implement evidence-based practices and implementing these plans with fidelity,
- Engaging in ongoing progress monitoring and adjusting plans as needed.

Notably, unlike school improvement plans that are overwhelmingly complicated static documents created for compliance reasons and then set aside and forgotten, the DI plan serves as a dynamic guide throughout the year to bring focus to the school improvement process. Participants indicated that the DI protocols, as well as the CTE staff, supported the effective implementation of the process. Although it was early to determine conclusively that DI was improving student outcomes, participants cited specific examples of improvement in student data and also reported confidently on teachers' increased attention to implementing action steps with fidelity.

Input from the district and school administrators interviewed suggests the following potential opportunities for further strengthening DI:

- Building on the broad commitment to implementing action steps by engaging stakeholders beyond the mathematics, literacy, and safety teams in the plan overall.
- Strengthening teams' data literacy and ability to engage in root cause analysis and ensuring that action plans arise from root cause analysis.
- Addressing the difficulty in scheduling adequate meeting time.

Appendix: Interview Protocol

We would like to invite you to participate in an interview about the implementation of Dynamic Impact in Worcester County Public Schools. You do not have to participate if you don't want to, and if you choose to participate, you can stop your participation at any time. Your comments will be confidential: comments may be quoted, but they will not be attributed to a specific person. This interview will take about 45 minutes.

Do you agree to participate in this interview?

Do you agree to be audio recorded?

<u>Why DI?</u>

- [For principals, adapted to be hopes not motivations]: What motivated you and WCPS to implement Dynamic Impact as your school improvement process?
- How do you see DI as different from other school improvement processes, including those you have used in the past?

- <u>Engagement and Impact</u>

- To what extent are stakeholders engaged in DI?
    - Core Four/principals only: To what extent are teachers and administrators invested in the DI protocols and the implementation of the action plans?
- What changes, if any, have you seen in teacher practices that you believe are a result of DI?
- What changes, if any, have you seen in student outcomes that you believe are related to DI?

- Next five questions are for the Core Four/principals only (not Superintendent or Board Member):

    - Now I'll invite your feedback and insights about the UNITED, ROOT, and CHANGE protocols and the Triangle Technique.
    - Let's start with the UNITED. A key piece of Dynamic Impact is the UNITED structured teaming protocol. Could you describe stakeholders' use of this protocol and its impact on the ways your teams work together and the work they accomplish?
    - What about ROOT? To what extent have the ROOT protocol and the Triangle Technique equipped your teams to engage in tangled data analysis and use data to inform their work?
    - Let's turn to the CHANGE protocol. In what ways has the CHANGE protocol influenced the selection of evidence-based practices, the *focused* implementation of action plans, and the attainment of measurable progress?

- Sometimes school and district staff struggle to find sufficient time to design, implement, and monitor progress on school improvement plans, and DI is designed to streamline these efforts. To what extent has time been an issue for school improvement since you started using DI? How does this compare to your experience of time constraints with previous school improvement plans?
- [TSI principals may bring up how DI interacts with other school improvement practices.]

- Overall Impact and Reactions

  - Overall, how has DI had an impact on the school improvement process?
  - What are your overall reactions to DI in WCPS?