



Using Student and Teacher Survey Data to Improve Schools

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Using Student and Teacher Survey Data to Improve Schools

Doctor of Education Leadership (Ed.L.D.)
Capstone

Submitted by

Alex Seeskin

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in partial fulfillment of the graduation requirements for the degree of
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To my grandparents: Nana, Bubby, and Bappa

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Abstract

Amid a growing debate over the use of standardized test scores, states and districts across the country have begun using alternative measures of school quality, including surveys of students and teachers. As a result, many schools now have access to troves of diagnostic data on student and teacher perception. However, with few established practices for analyzing or planning with survey data, there has been wide variation in how schools actually use their results.

I completed my residency at UChicago Impact, a non-profit connected to the University of Chicago's Urban Education Institute. UChicago Impact administers the 5Essentials Survey, based on the research in *Organizing Schools for Improvement* (Bryk et al, 2010), in nearly 5,000 schools nationwide. My strategic project was to design and pilot a series of workshops to help teams of teachers and administrators use their 5Essentials data to improve the organization of their schools and, ultimately, student outcomes.

My research identified two core problems that often prevent practitioners from using survey data effectively: (1) the complex social problems rooted in survey data require brave conversations, unintuitive planning, and collective action, making the data hard to influence; (2) the infrequent administration and release of survey data make it difficult for schools to collect new data and adjust their actions accordingly.

I found that as a result of attending the workshops, most teams were able to have productive conversations about their schools and coalesce around a plan for improvement. However, when it came time to implement their plans, the teams faced obstacles around accountability, coherence, and assessment of impact. Moreover, it is

unclear that any of the actions that teams did implement will lead to improvements in student outcomes.

Given the relatively limited nature of the this intervention – eight total hours of workshops – these findings suggest that the analysis of student and teacher survey data may be an effective way to help schools begin to build trust between stakeholders. However, in order for survey data to drive sustained, measurable improvement, the reporting infrastructure needs to become more nimble, and leaders have to balance support and accountability, while integrating survey data with other data sources and initiatives.

Introduction

Since the emergence of No Child Left Behind in 2002, the most common approach to school improvement has focused on the use of accountability measures tied to standardized test scores: increasingly, teachers and principals are held responsible for their students' gains on these tests. One problem with this approach is that test scores are lagging indicators of student learning. In a critique of NCLB, Richard Elmore (2009) notes,

Improvement in performance is never constant and linear. Improvements in performance often - one might say usually - lag behind improvements in capacity and quality; that is, one sees significant changes in classroom practice well before one sees their results in student test scores. It takes time for new practices to become seated in the culture and organization of schools, and it takes time for those practices to develop to a level that can be seen in student performance. (p. 250)

In other words, the results tell schools and districts whether or not they are on-track to achieve short-term benchmarks, but they don't provide insight into whether or not schools are organized for long-term improvement. Elmore argues that the best leading indicator for long-term school improvement is not a point-in-time snapshot of achievement, but rather a broader view of a schools' social capital, which he defines as "heavy investments in learning at various levels, structures and processes that link people at various levels with one another and create channels of feedback across levels, and investments in external supports and connections to sources of new knowledge" (p. 252).

As more states and districts are coming to this understanding, they are working with support organizations to develop increasingly sophisticated measures of organizational health. However, the recent emergence of these tools has left the field without an understanding of how to use the complex data they generate. As Coburn and Turner (2011) point out, this problem is significant: "One of the central lessons from

research on data use in schools and school districts is that assessments, student tests, and other forms of data are only as good as how they are used” (p. 173).

In many ways, the University of Chicago has been at the center of the recent innovations around data development. In particular, the university’s Consortium for Chicago School Research (CCSR) has made two major contributions to the field. One group of researchers, led by Tony Bryk, defined five “essential” organizing conditions – leadership; professional capacity; school learning climate; parent, school, community ties; and instructional guidance – that are necessary for improvement by correlating student (grades 6-12) and teacher responses to surveys with student growth on test scores (Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, & Easton, 2010). In their book, *Organizing Schools for Improvement* (2010), Bryk and colleagues demonstrate that schools that were strong in three or more of the five essentials were ten times more likely to improve student growth outcomes than schools that were weak in three or more essentials. After providing Chicago Public Schools with survey data on each of the essentials for decades, UChicago Impact, a non-profit connected to CCSR, took over survey administration and created an online distribution platform for the survey data and currently produces survey results for schools in Illinois, Detroit, Minneapolis, and other locations. They also renamed the five essential supports 5Essentials and created new descriptors: Effective Leadership, Collaborative Teachers, Involved Families, Supportive Environment, and Ambitious Instruction.

At the same time that Bryk and colleagues were publishing their findings, another set of CCSR researchers, led by Elaine Allensworth, was demonstrating that a student’s “On-Track” status, a combination of attendance and grades, was more predictive of high

school graduation than race, socioeconomic status, and test scores combined (Allensworth, 2013 and Rosenkranz, 2014). They worked with Chicago Public Schools to develop a ninth-grade “On-Track” indicator that told schools when a student was in danger of failing one or more classes, and collaborated with Network for College Success, a group of CPS high schools also connected to the University of Chicago, to test the On-Track data’s utility in schools. In 2009, CPS began providing all high schools with On-Track data every five weeks.

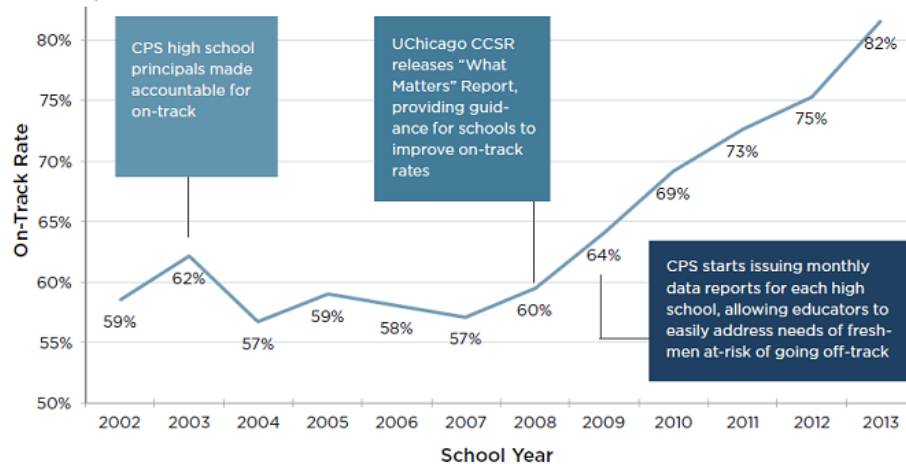
Interestingly, these two data sets – 5Essentials and On-Track – were utilized very differently by schools. Though thousands of schools inside and outside of Chicago received 5Essentials data, use of the data was uneven. A recent report from the Illinois Educator Research Council (2014) on the use of the 5Essentials around the state of Illinois notes,

Use of the 5E data varied greatly among the participating districts, ranging from fairly extensive use to no use at all. The majority of the districts, however, fell somewhere in the middle, using the 5E data for a limited number of activities... Survey respondents did not report high use of the 5E data for planning purposes, 33% of superintendents and 48% of principals reported using the data for continuous improvement planning, while only 14% of superintendents and 28% of principals reported using the data for modifying district/school improvement plans. (p. 4)

The response to On-Track data in CPS high schools, however, was much more immediate and effective as illustrated below (Roderick, 2014).

FIGURE 1

Ninth grade on-track rates improved most when schools acted on real time data about student absences and course performance.



Note: This figure represents first-time freshmen who are not receiving special education services and are not enrolled in a charter or alternative school.

(Roderick et al., 2014, p. 5)

In a recent op-ed, Tim Knowles (2014), Director of the Urban Education Institute, which includes CCSR and UChicago Impact, describes schools' use of On-Track data:

Suddenly, addressing the dropout problem was not about the host of factors over which educators have no control – families, neighborhoods, poverty, gangs, violence or prior academic deficiencies. There was a single, manageable intervention point: ninth grade course performance... Teachers and counselors at each school followed through with interventions tailored to their particular students' needs. The new focus compelled greater problem-solving and collaboration among teachers and administrators committed to ensuring every single student was on-track for graduation. (para. 7)

The impact of the On-Track data in CPS has been significant: over the past seven years, Chicago Public School's On-Track rate has grown from 57% to 84% and graduation rates from 58% to 69%; based on current On-Track rates, CCSR projects the CPS's graduation rate will reach 80% in 2017 (Knowles, 2014).

In other words, while many teachers and principals were struggling to use 5Essentials data, some of the same practitioners were eagerly using On-Track data to improve the attainment of thousands of students. Why did two data systems, produced by

the same organization, and launched in many of the same schools at the same time, produce such different results?

This capstone explores how schools can use teacher and student survey data for improvement. I completed my Ed.L.D. third-year residency at UChicago Impact, the developer of the 5Essentials. My strategic project was to design and pilot a series of professional learning workshops to help teams of teachers and administrators use their schools' 5Essentials data to improve the organization of their schools and ultimately, student outcomes. My findings paint a complicated, but ultimately hopeful, picture for the future of student and teacher survey data.

Review of Knowledge for Action

A comparison of On-Track and 5Essentials provides a case study of the complex interaction between data and data use. In this section, I explore the research and knowledge base around the characteristics of effective data in order to understand why many practitioners have not used 5Essentials data but have used On-Track data. I find two key differences that explain the variation in use between the data sets: the ability of practitioners to (1) positively influence the data, and (2) see evidence of their influence in regular updates of the data. Following this analysis, I conclude this section with an exploration of the research and knowledge base around the necessary supports for practitioners to effectively use data that is both difficult to influence and untimely.

Characteristics of Effective Data:

CCSR's "Selecting Effective Indicators" (2014) lays out four characteristics of effective data to inform decision-making (I include other sources in support of each assertion in parentheses):

1. Valid for the intended purpose (Marsh, 2012)
2. Actionable by schools (Coburn and Turner, 2012)
3. Meaningful and easily understood by practitioners (Marsh, 2012)
4. Aligned with the priorities of the district and schools (Means et al., 2012)

Broadly speaking, the 5Essentials data clearly meet the first and fourth criteria, meet the third criteria to some extent, and do not meet the second criteria at all.

Criterion #1: Valid for the intended purpose

The 5Essentials data are "valid for the intended purpose" since the five essential supports are backed by decades of research by CCSR: if schools can significantly

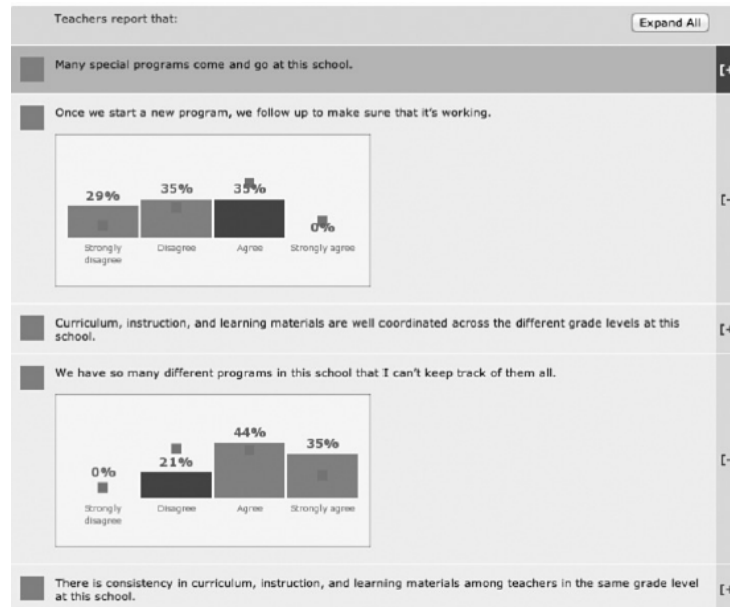
improve their 5Essentials survey results, they increase the likelihood of improving test scores.

Criterion #4: Aligned with district and school priorities

The broad nature of the 5Essentials framework means that it is often “aligned with the priorities of districts and schools.” Indeed, for the past few years, CPS has included 5Essentials scores in its school performance rating for all district schools (On-Track data have been part of the rating for high schools over the last decade), something most CPS principals pay close attention to (Office of Data and Accountability, 2014).

Criterion #3: Meaningful and Easily Understood by Practitioners

Whether the 5Essentials data are “meaningful and easily understood by practitioners” is less clear. Generally speaking, the data are “meaningful” since they represent the voices of teachers and students. However, 5Essentials Project Managers, who lead training sessions and respond to queries about the survey, report that users often do not understand how their responses on individual questions (see figure below) translate to a 1-99 score on Measures (each Essential has four or five Measures, and each Measure is a composite of multiple survey items). Specifically, practitioners become confused when their school receives a score of 25 for a Measure even though 70% or 80% of respondents agree or strongly agree to the questions that compose that Measure. In actuality, the score is calculated relative to all of the other schools taking the survey, and the statisticians at CCSR use a complex modeling theory called Rasch to calculate it; but until this process is explained to them, practitioners often find it very confusing.



(Sebring and Montgomery, 2014, p. 75)

Despite misunderstandings about how Measure scores are calculated, 5Essentials data are not so dense or complex that practitioners are at a complete loss to understand their results. Since everyone understands that a 20 indicates a weak Essential or Measure and an 80 indicates a strong one, it is entirely possible for practitioners to use the data to identify strengths and weaknesses without understanding the sophisticated scoring process. Moreover, the data are presented on a relatively easy-to-use dashboard that allows users to navigate their results. In fact, the Illinois Education Research Council study (2014) on the use of the 5Essentials data in Illinois – which included interviews with 79 district/school administrators and school personnel in 15 different districts around the state – found no problems with the data’s clarity.

Criterion #4: Actionable by Schools

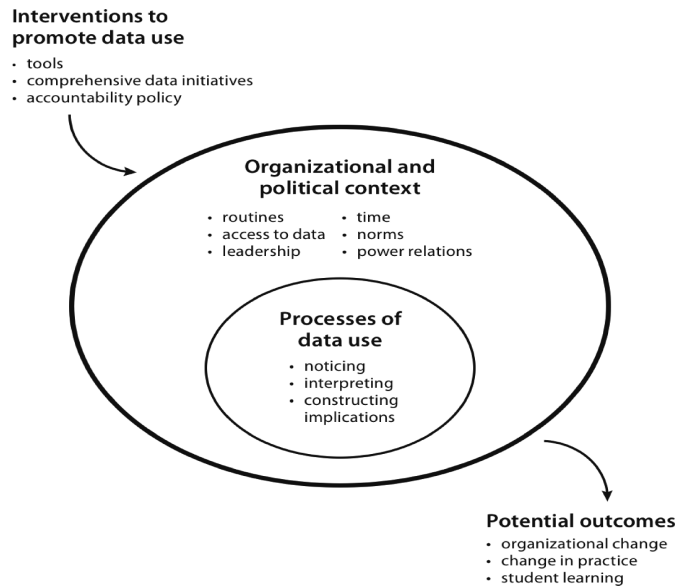
The one criterion in CCSR’s “Selecting Effective Indicators” that the 5Essentials

data do not meet at all is “actionable by schools.” CCSR (2014) argues that in order to be used, the outcomes measured by data must be easily influenced by practitioners: “When indicators measure something that a school is able to influence, efforts to monitor progress on the indicator have real meaning to practitioners.” There are two reasons 5Essentials data are more difficult to influence than On-Track data. First, the unit of analysis for the 5Essentials is the entire school, and sometimes – as in the case of the Family Engagement Essential – the broader school community. This makes it nearly impossible for an individual principal, teacher, or counselor to influence the measure by him or herself – the measure can only change through collective action. Moreover, the 5Essentials data rarely suggest easy-to-execute or intuitive interventions. For example, what should a school do to improve “trust” or “commitment?” Understandably, practitioners are often at a loss for where to begin.

In contrast, the unit of analysis for On-Track is the individual student – principals, teachers, and counselors receive data that pinpoints students who have fallen off-track. Though addressing challenges for a student who is chronically absent can require collective effort, challenges for other students are easier to tackle – waking up late or not having enough money for the bus – and often require a relatively small intervention on the part of an individual teacher or counselor. In addition, the interventions are relatively easy to execute (e.g., calling home) and intuitive (e.g., pulling the student aside to ask how things are going).

Means et al. (2012) and Coburn and Turner (2011) suggest a third reason why 5Essentials data are difficult to influence. Means et al. note that in order for schools to use data effectively, a high level of trust or social capital must exist between staff

members. Coburn and Turner (2011) focus less on the characteristics of data and more on the organizational culture necessary to use data intelligently. Their framework begins with an intervention – a tool, comprehensive initiative, or accountability system – that is intended to increase data use. In order for the intervention to impact student outcomes, it must first interact with both the organizational culture (norms, routines, leadership, etc.) and the school’s processes for data use (noticing, interpreting, constructing implications).



(Coburn & Turner, 2011, p. 176)

The different actors within schools make the organizational culture particularly complex. In *Trust in Schools*, Bryk and Schneider (2002) describe how power relations can make it difficult to establish relational trust:

A complex web of social exchanges conditions the basic operations of schools. Embedded in the daily social routines of schools is an interrelated set of mutual dependencies among all key actors: students, teachers, principals and administrators, and parents. These structural dependencies create feelings of vulnerability for the individuals involved. This vulnerability is especially salient in the context of asymmetric power relations (p. 20).

Coburn and Turner’s emphasis on school culture and Bryk and Schneider’s on the complex power relations that undergird this culture highlights a particular conundrum for

the 5Essentials data. If a strong organizational culture is necessary for effective data use, how can schools with poor organizational culture data on the 5Essentials talk openly, across “asymmetric power relations,” about their poor performance? More specifically, how can a principal and teachers in a school with a low score on principal-teacher trust have productive conversations about the lack of trust? The 5Essentials data makes these conversations particularly challenging since three of the Essentials – Effective Leaders, Collaborative Teachers, and Involved Families – directly implicate a key stakeholder.

In contrast, schools can use On-Track data to identify at-risk students, and though a possible cause for low attendance or grades could be organizational culture, there are other causes, such as student motivation, family engagement and transportation, that play a more primary role (Rosenkranz, 2014). The result is that a few members of a school’s staff – principal, lead counselor, on-track coordinator – can use On-Track data to identify groups of students in need of interventions, and in many cases, initiate those interventions themselves. Consequently, it is possible for a school to have a poor organizational culture and still improve its On-Track rate. For example, Hancock High School, which is often cited by CCSR and the Network for College Success as a successful example of the benefits of monitoring On-Track data, has moderate-to-low 5Essentials scores, suggesting a weak organizational culture (Sanchez, 2014 and Padilla, 2014).

Thus, On-Track data are likely easier to influence than 5Essentials data because the unit of analysis is smaller, any resulting actions are more intuitive, and taking action is less dependent on organizational capacity. Heifetz’s (2009) distinction between technical and adaptive problems is a helpful framework to think about these differences in the two data sets:

While technical problems may be very complex and critically important, they

have known solutions that can be implemented by current know-how. They can be resolved through the application of authoritative expertise and through the organization's current structures, procedures, and ways of doing things. Adaptive challenges can only be addressed through changes in people's priorities, beliefs, habits, and loyalties. Making progress requires going beyond any authoritative expertise to mobilize discovery, shedding certain entrenched ways, tolerating losses, and generating the new capacity to thrive anew. (p. 19)

In many ways, improving a school's On-Track rate represents a largely technical challenge since low student attendance and grades often "have known solutions that can be implemented by current know-how." Improving a school's 5Essentials data, on the other hand, represents a primarily adaptive challenge since issues like trust and commitment "can only be addressed through changes in people's priorities, beliefs, habits, and loyalties" (Heifetz, 2009). Still, Heifetz is careful to point out that most problems have both technical and adaptive elements. Indeed, it would not be fair to say that On-Track data capture entirely technical problems or that 5Essentials data capture entirely adaptive ones. A school that improves its On-Track percentage by 20 points might still face some adaptive issues, such as the need for teachers to rethink the purpose of grades. Likewise, several of the measures in the 5Essentials – safety, for instance – clearly have technical elements in practice, such as the need for teachers to stand outside their classrooms during student transitions. Thus, on a continuum between adaptive and technical challenges 5Essentials data identify problems closer to the adaptive side and On-Track data identify problems closer to the technical side.

In fact, the central argument in *Organizing Schools for Improvement* is that in order for schools to improve, they need to address what Bryk et al. (2010) refer to as the "social base":

Quite simply, the technical activities of school improvement rest on a social base. Effecting constructive change in teaching and learning makes demands on the social resources of a school community. In the absence of these resources,

individual reform initiatives are less likely to be engaged deeply, build on one another over time, and culminate in significant improvements in a school's capacity to educate all its children. So building *relational* trust remains a central concern for leadership as well. (p. 204)

Bryk's "technical activities" and "social base" are similar to Heifetz's concept of technical and adaptive problems, respectively: in order to make deep, long-lasting change, both writers argue that you need to address technical as well as adaptive problems. Thus, while 5Essentials data may be difficult to influence because the problems it captures are closer to the adaptive end, practitioners must address these problems in order to affect student learning in the long run.

A Fifth Criterion: Timeliness of the Data

After his work at CCSR, Tony Bryk became President of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, where he focuses primarily on applying improvement science to the field of education, and argues that the timeliness of the data is critically important for system improvement. Bryk (2103) distinguishes improvement data from accountability or summative data, the latter of which he defines as "typically reported after the school year has concluded. Students providing data do not directly benefit as they are about last year's instruction/teacher/curriculum" (p. 10). Although the 5Essentials data are designed to give schools a formative diagnostic to catalyze improvement efforts, the data are generally reported once a year and often after the school year ends. Thus, Bryk would likely see the 5Essentials data as summative and unlikely to help schools improve: from his perspective, the infrequent release of 5Essentials data makes it nearly impossible for schools to quickly test the efficacy of new strategies.

Bryk (2013) argues that improvement data is most actionable when it is easily

collected and quickly reported. Specifically, one use of improvement data that he recommends – predictive analytics – describes the use of On-Track data: “[Predictive analytics] answers questions regarding which individuals or groups of individuals are at higher risk for problematic outcomes within a given setting. They can guide educators better to target their attention, including supplemental learning supports, in some places rather than others” (p. 110). Initially, CCSR provided schools with On-Track data at the end of each school year, but as the district became increasingly aware of the importance of On-Track data, it began to provide schools with updated data every five weeks. The frequent updates allow schools to test different approaches and receive quick feedback on effectiveness (Rosenkranz, 2014).

Summary of Implications of Research for 5Essentials Data

In summary, existing research and practice-based knowledge suggest two core obstacles that are preventing practitioners from using 5Essentials data:

1. The adaptive problems rooted in the data require unintuitive planning, collective action, and challenging conversations across lines of authority, which make the data hard to influence.
2. The infrequent administration and release of survey data make it challenging for schools to collect new data and adjust their actions accordingly.

The next part of this section will move towards a theory of action by examining the research and knowledge base on potential interventions to ameliorate these two challenges.

Addressing Adaptive Dilemmas

In order to create a space for adaptive learning, many authors recommend an initial phase of cognitive disequilibrium. Edgar Schein (2010) calls this process “unfreezing” or “disconfirmation”, and describes it as leaders looking at “discomforting data,” or data that leads members of an organization to a state of disequilibrium, particularly when it is connected to “important goals and ideals.” He notes,

Disconfirmation is any information that shows the organization that some of its goals are not being met or that some of its processes are not accomplishing what they are supposed to... However, the information is usually only symptomatic. It does not automatically tell the organization what the underlying problem might be, but it creates disequilibrium in pointing out that something is wrong somewhere. It makes members of the organization uncomfortable and anxious. (p. 301)

Due to this discomfort and anxiety, Schein argues that unfreezing must be accompanied by a sufficient degree of safety and reassurance to make people “see a possibility of solving the problem and learning something new without loss of identity or integrity” (p. 301).

Heifetz (2009) terms this balance between discomfort and safety the “productive zone of disequilibrium,” a place where “adaptive leaders” make people uncomfortable enough to desire change, but safe enough to handle their loss and able to manage their resistance. He recommends that people name “elephants” or talk about the things they are most afraid to talk about. Kahn (2009), in his book about successful project teams, is even more direct: “None of what is written in this book will make much of a difference in the life of your team unless you decide to move toward rather than away from the anxiety that lives beneath the surface of all teams” (p. 20).

There are several practices for operationalizing a “productive zone of disequilibrium.” For starters, Heifetz (2009) suggests that a change process can only

begin when people literally or figuratively leave their day-to-day work environment and are able to look at their work through a reflective lens. He describes this behavior as leaving the “dance floor” and “stepping on the balcony” and he notes that sometimes people need to actually leave their day-to-day workspace and go offsite in order to focus and gain a new perspective. Several authors also recommend that when dealing with “discomforting data,” there is a short period of time for participants to simply “notice” the data in front of them without making any inferences (Coburn & Turner, 2011; Senge et al., 2012).

Another critical practice for creating a productive zone of disequilibrium is to generate norms for the organization or team. Norms are the explicit expectations a group has for how it will function. They can include everything from what time the group will begin working each day, to how decisions will be made, to how group members will interact with each other (Boudett, City, & Murnane, 2013). Making these expectations explicit can create a “contract” that keeps members accountable to one another, as Park and Datnow (2009) find in their study of four data-driven districts.

In addition to creating a productive zone of disequilibrium, Heifetz (2009) argues that while the use of authority is effective for implementing a technical solution to a technical problem, when core assumptions and relationships need to be questioned, authority can be stifling. During pre-retreat visits with leaders, Heifetz and his leadership consultants are clear about how the power dynamic should progress: “We sometimes use the standard that, if someone were to watch a videotape of the off-site, it would be impossible to tell which person was the senior authority in the group” (Heifetz, 2009, p. 157).

One way to help reduce the power of authority is to use protocols (Marsh, 2012). The purpose of protocols comes from what McDonald, Mohr, Dichter, and McDonald (2013) describe as the notion that “under the right circumstances, constraints are liberating” (p. 1). Rather than worrying about process - when to speak, when to listen - protocols can give participants the freedom to engage completely in the topic at hand, and by giving everyone the space to speak and listen, help ensure equity of voice (Nelson & Slavit, 2007). McDonald et al. (2013) note,

Protocols not only force all students to participate – for example, by structuring in turn-taking – but also force students to listen to each other – for example, by forbidding any repetition in the turn-taking. No one gets to lurk in a protocol, and no one is shut out. (p. 7)

Many of those who practice protocols also rotate roles, such as a facilitator, note-taker, or agenda-creator, which helps ensure that as much as possible, formal authority is temporary.

Using Summative Data for Improvement

The Deming cycle (Plan, Do, Study, Act) is the model for nearly every improvement framework or inquiry cycle in the sector, including Data Wise (Boudett et al., 2013), an improvement process for student achievement data, and much of Bryk’s current work (Bryk, Gomez, & Grunow, 2011). The Deming cycle is dependent on the collection of formative measures of success, and there are few specific references in the improvement literature to integrating summative data into an improvement cycle.

However, the practice of using summative data for improvement is relatively common in the sector. Boudett et al. (2013) and Curtis and City (2009) suggest that one way system level leaders and school leadership teams can use summative data (such as state test

results) is as a tool for initial problem identification at the beginning of a long-term improvement cycle or strategic planning process. Formative data (such as formative assessments or observations of instruction) is then periodically used to measure the degree to which the district or school is making progress.

Summative data are also used for problem identification in many recent iterations of school improvement plans across the sector. For example, Chicago Public Schools' Continuous Improvement Work Plan (CIWP) requires schools to use 5Essentials and other summative data sources as indicators to identify where to shift resources and which goals to set (CPS Office of Strategy, Research, and Accountability, 2012). The district even highlights the 5Essentials Survey (titled "My Voice, My School" in CPS) as a "strong" example of using evidence to define problems in their guide for principals on the CIWP (CPS Office of Strategy, Research, and Accountability, 2012).

Theory of Action

Based on this analysis, an effective theory of action would directly address the two core problems that are preventing practitioners from using 5Essentials data: 1) the adaptive and 2) the summative nature of the data. In order to create a space for adaptive change, the research suggests using norms and protocols to allow participants to have difficult conversations that move beyond lines of formal authority. To further make the data actionable, the research recommends having schools use the data as a jumping off point for cycles of improvement. My Review of Knowledge for Action, therefore, leads me to the following theory of action:

IF...

I can design and execute a sequence of workshops for UChicago Impact where Instructional Leadership Teams analyze their 5Essentials results using practices that are rooted in:

1. Adaptive leadership
(Practices: Norms, Protocols, Low-Inference Observation, Purposeful Reflection)
2. Long-term cycles of improvement
(Practices: Root Cause Identification, Action Planning, Formative Data Collection, Adjustment)

THEN...

These Instructional Leadership Teams will...

1. Deepen their understanding of the practices of:
 - a. Adaptive leadership

b. Long-term cycles of improvement

2. Apply these practices in their schools to an area for growth from their 5Essential results.
3. Improve their school's 5Essentials results for their specific area for growth their school's 5Essentials results more broadly.
4. Make their schools more likely to improve student outcomes, as demonstrated by Bryk et al. (2010).

Description

The conception of my strategic project was clear from the time I signed a contract with UEI in early 2014, and it changed very little over the course of the residency: I was to design and pilot a new suite of professional learning modules that enabled 5Essentials clients to use the data to improve their organizational conditions. Prior to my arrival, the organization had three core training sessions for first-year clients. Those sessions were more presentations than workshops, intended primarily to instill a deep understanding of the research, the survey administration, and the scoring process. In addition to making the learning more interactive, the new design had to account for UChicago Impact's significant scale and limited capacity: although the organization provides 5Essentials data to thousands of schools, I was the only employee working full-time on professional learning. Thus, any impact achieved by the pilot had to be replicable with different clients and limited resources.

These concerns led to a relatively modest intervention that UChicago Impact could plausibly execute at scale after the conclusion of my project: a sequence of two-hour workshops and a few optional coaching sessions. Finally, since the unit of analysis for the 5Essentials survey is the school, I decided to target Instructional Leadership Teams, which are often the formal structure responsible for setting school-wide policy and typically consist of the principal, assistant principal, and several lead teachers or counselors.

A Partnership Emerges

From the beginning of my residency, my supervisor and I felt that though there would be several opportunities to test out new material, we needed a partner who would give us wide latitude to take risks and provide honest feedback on session design and implementation. Evanston District 65 (which includes all of the elementary and middle schools in Evanston, Illinois) emerged as a design partner toward the end of July 2014. Although the remainder of the capstone will focus on the work with District 65, I facilitated subsequent iterations of the workshops with other schools and districts as well.

UChicago Impact pursued a partnership with District 65 for several reasons. First, there were pre-existing professional relationships between the district's senior leadership, me, and the UChicago Impact team (including the CEO of UChicago Impact and the Director of the 5Essentials). Second, this personal relationship was bolstered by a philosophical commitment: the district had decided to organize its strategic plan around the 5Essentials framework. In addition, Evanston schools already had two years of 5Essentials data and its principals were reasonably familiar with the survey and the results. We thought these professional, philosophical, and political connections to the 5Essentials would ensure a productive level of buy-in and support for the pilot.

Evanston District 65 also has a wide range of schools (K-5, 6-8, K-8) that serve a diverse student population in terms of race, income, and achievement level. We believed this diversity would give us the opportunity to test our work and theory of action in schools with different contexts. Finally, the district's proximity to Hyde Park, where UChicago Impact is located, meant that frequent meetings with district leadership and principals were possible.

We formalized the partnership between UChicago Impact and Evanston District 65 in a memorandum of understanding on August 7, 2014. As part of the partnership, we would pilot its new workshop sequence with members of Instructional Leadership Teams (ILTs) at three to five schools. However, due to financial constraints (paying teachers or substitutes for work time) and scheduling constraints (finding times that worked for everyone on the ILT), we were not able to work with entire ILTs. Instead, we decided to focus on the principal and three to five teacher leaders on the ILT.

Following the agreement, a senior leader in the district and I agreed to meet once a week to maintain communication between the organizations and to ensure that the district was involved with the planning of the workshops. These meetings took place between August and December.

Prior to the selection of a cohort of schools, Evanston asked us to provide two professional development workshops to all of its principals. The first of these workshops, which took place on August 29, 2014, focused primarily on the implications of the 5Essentials data for individual leadership growth. The second workshop, which took place on October 12, 2014, focused on how principals could communicate their 5Essentials survey results to their school communities.

On October 13, a district leader sent an email to all Evanston principals inviting them to express interest in joining the cohort. Six principals responded, and the district leader chose five with very different 5Essentials scores (schools' 5Essentials data are not provided in this capstone to protect their anonymity). Four of the schools – Schools B, C, D, and E – were K-5 elementary schools, which meant that they did not have 5Essentials data for two of the essentials (Supportive Environment and Ambitious Instruction) that

only exist for students in grades 6-12. The other school, School A, was a 6-8 middle school, and had survey data on all five essentials.

The Workshops

Workshop Attendance			
Date	Workshop Focus	# of Schools	# of Participants
<i>October 30, 2014</i>	Area of Strength	5	23
<i>November 3, 2014</i>	Area of Growth	5	22
<i>December 1, 2014</i>	Action Planning	4	14
<i>March 2, 2015</i>	After-Action Review	5	20

Over the course of five months, I led four workshops with the school teams, each lasting two hours. The first workshop took place on October 30 and sought to provide participants with an introduction to the data, the norms, and the data protocols by focusing on a school's area of strength. Our goal was for teams to be familiar with the norms and protocols so that when they talked through an area for growth at the second meeting (November 3), they would be able to focus less on the structure of the protocols and more on the data and its implications.

A leader from the district kicked off the workshop by welcoming everyone to the cohort and talking about the importance of the 5Essentials. Shortly after the introduction, he left and no district leaders attended any of the subsequent workshops.

I followed the district leader by introducing myself and UChicago Impact, and asking for everyone's agreement on a set of five norms (to which I would return at the beginning of each of the workshops). Two of the norms, "experience discomfort" and

“expect and accept non-closure,” were taken directly from *Courageous Conversations About Race*, by Singleton and Linton (2006). A third, “adopt a learning stance,” was loosely based on *Meeting Wise* by Boudett and City (2014). The other two norms, “challenge yourself and one another (politely)” and “listen empathetically,” were meant to encourage active participation. My hope was that these norms would create the space for a productive zone of disequilibrium.

Following the agreement on norms, the session moved into an overview of the scoring process so that participants could understand the basic structure (items, measures, essentials) and pitfalls (e.g., jumping to conclusions, focusing too much on individual items, etc.) of working with 5Essentials data.

The remainder of the workshop used protocols to focus schools on their area of strength. The protocols included a selection protocol that helped groups make decisions (such as selecting pieces of the data to focus on) and a root cause analysis protocol, which had teams identify the actions or beliefs that they think led to a particular score. Both protocols began with structured time for teams to make low-inference observations about their data.

In between the October 30 and November 3 workshops, participants’ homework was to look through their data and choose an area for growth. I told participants that one of the criteria they should use to choose an area for growth was how uncomfortable the topic made them, saying, “If you think you’ll feel uncomfortable talking about it, then it’s something you need to talk about.”

At the beginning of the November 3 session, I reviewed the norms, paying particular attention to “experience discomfort” and “listen empathetically” and then

guided the teams through the same set of protocols they used at the October 30 workshop, except this time applying them to an area for growth. Participants then brainstormed possible actions to address the root cause. I concluded the session by asking them to name one thing they learned during the workshops and one commitment they were making to their team.

The teams' homework in between the November 3 and December 1 workshops was to present the data to a larger group of staff, parents, students, or community members (depending on the specific area for growth) and return for the December 1 workshop with even more potential actions. Four of the five schools attended the December 1 workshop, with School E's entire team missing due to illness (I implemented an abbreviated version of the December 1 workshop with School E on December 15).

I began the December 1 workshop by having the teams review their area for growth and the root causes they identified. Then, in order to encourage school teams to conceive of their actions as both problem-solving (root cause) and goal-setting (vision of success), I asked them to develop a vision of success: what would it look like if they were to dramatically increase performance in their area for growth? The teams then placed their potential action items on an "Effort-Impact" graph, and used a voting protocol to select one or two actions to plan around. Before they voted, I explained that they should think of "Impact" as the degree to which actions both addressed their root cause and led them towards their vision of success.

In order to emphasize the importance of strategy in action planning, after teams had chosen a few actions, I introduced the concept of a theory of action and modeled the

creation of a theory of action. I also gave participants three questions to guide the development of their theories of action:

1. Are your action(s) specific, but still substantial? If your team's #1 action is high-effort, break it into its most important low/moderate effort components.
2. Do you believe your actions will both actually address your root cause and lead to your vision of success?
3. Do you have the capacity to successfully execute your actions?

Once teams had developed a theory of action, I gave them the remainder of the workshop to fill out an action and communication-planning template (Appendix 1) that asked them to identify specific deliverables, owners, due dates, and evidence of early impact. Although their homework was to implement their action plan over the course of the next two months and to collect evidence of impact, I did not spend any time during the December 1 workshop discussing what could constitute “evidence of impact” and how teams could collect that evidence.

On March 2, the teams participated in the final workshop: an after-action review. I began by asking the teams to revisit what actions and outcomes they wanted to happen when they created their action plans in December. Then, I asked the teams to chart the actions and outcomes that had happened over the past few months. Although a few teams did bring anecdotal evidence of impact, none had collected formal data. The teams then identified barriers and enablers that stalled or accelerated their action plans. Finally, teams considered what to continue doing, what to stop doing, and what to start doing.

In addition to the workshops, I provided two more pieces of support. First, I communicated to the principals of the five schools that I was available to support their

data analysis, planning, and implementation in any way I could. In an email to them following the December 1 workshop I wrote,

I want to be as helpful as possible without being a nuisance....that can mean everything from weekly check-ins/coaching to very little/no involvement. If you let me know ahead of time, I am always happy to swing by your school to talk through a tricky situation or present/observe/meet with an ILT, whole staff, or parent group. Also fine to stay out of your hair. Use me as much or as little as you want between now and our next session...just let me know what works best for you and your school and we'll figure out the right balance.

Different schools requested different levels of support, with Schools B and D, the schools with the lowest initial 5Essentials scores, requesting the most assistance outside of the workshops. My coaching sessions with these principals focused primarily on how to communicate results to staff and parents, and how to include disgruntled but politically important staff in the planning process. The coaching sessions occurred both in person and over the phone. The presentations to the staff and Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) introduced the basics of the 5Essentials research and scoring process. They lasted approximately 20 minutes and were often followed by questions.

Presentations and Coaching for Schools		
Schools	Presentations	Coaching Sessions
<i>School A</i>	1	0
<i>School B</i>	2	3
<i>School C</i>	0	1
<i>School D</i>	2	3
<i>School E</i>	0	1

My additional form of support consisted of two joint presentations on the 5Essentials and my work with the 5 schools to the District 65 Board of Education. The first presentation took place on October 6 and was a general introduction to the 5Essentials. The second took place on December 1, after the workshop, and included a presentation of the district's 5Essentials data. With questions and answers, each presentation lasted approximately 30 minutes.

A few weeks after the presentation on October 6, two district leaders published an op-ed in the Evanston Roundtable that discussed the district's 5Essentials results and highlighted Evanston's partnership with UChicago Impact:

In conjunction with the release of this year's data, we are excited to announce a new partnership between District 65 and UChicago Impact... UChicago Impact is also providing more intensive support around data use, action planning and implementation to principals and instructional leadership teams in a cohort of five schools.

Following the December 1 presentation, the Evanston Roundtable published two pieces, one with updates on the support to schools and another analyzing the district's results (Gavin, 2014). The latter publication received a lot of attention in the community since it used bar graphs to compare schools, by name, on each of the Essentials.

Results

With two important exceptions, I was able to execute the “IF” portion of my theory of action, as described in my Description section. The first exception was that full Instructional Leadership Teams were not present for the workshops, with only the principal and three to five teacher leaders from the ILT participating. The second exception was that while the theory of action called for these teams to “use practices” that were “rooted in cycles of improvement,” I spent no time in the workshops guiding teams on how to collect formative data on the implementation of their actions. As a result, the collection of formative data (survey or otherwise) was limited and none of the schools had the necessary understanding to collect and analyze data to determine whether or not their actions were effective. In interviews, principals noted how difficult it was to think about measuring things like teacher-teacher trust, a measure in the Collaborative Teachers Essential, without a complex survey tool like the 5Essentials. At some level, this omission meant that teams were never able to complete a true improvement cycle.

Aside from these two exceptions, though, I was able to “design and execute a sequence of workshops” where members of ILTs “analyzed their 5Essentials results” using nearly all of the practices named in the theory of action.

The remainder of the Results section describes the degree to which the “THEN” portion of my theory of action was realized. I examine each of the “THEN” statements for which I was able to collect results.

“These teams will deepen their understanding of the practices of adaptive leadership and cycles of improvement.”

I sought to measure learning in three ways. The first was through a post-workshop survey on November 3 (Appendix 2) where I asked participants to describe what they thought they had learned, and coded these responses to align them with the learning objectives/practices identified in my theory of action. Out of 17 total responses, the most frequent were Embracing Discomfort (5), Purposeful Reflection (4), and Problem/Root Cause Definition (3). In addition, I asked participants to what extent the structure of the sessions enabled them to discuss the school's areas for growth, and all 21 respondents chose "somewhat" (7) or "to a great extent" (14). One participant wrote, "I was surprised that everyone was ready to talk about trust," and another noted that the workshops had helped him/her "be more vulnerable around growth areas." In response to a question about what commitment they made to their team, one person wrote, "I'm willing to sit with discomfort" and another noted, "commitment to be flexible to engage in challenging and uncomfortable situations."

In order to measure understanding around cycles of improvement, I focused on examples of work produced inside the workshops and interviews with principals prior to the last workshop. During the November 3 workshop, teams chose the following areas for growth and identified corresponding root causes:

Schools' Selected Areas for Growth and Root Causes		
School	Area for Growth	Root Cause
<i>School A</i>	Academic Press	Focus on Differentiation
<i>School B</i>	Teacher-Teacher Trust	Factions Between Veteran and New Teachers
<i>School C</i>	Collective Responsibility	Alpha Personalities Reluctant to Share Responsibility
<i>School D</i>	Commitment to the School	Misperceptions about the Principal's Intentions
<i>School E</i>	Principal-Teacher Trust	Norms Around the Way People

		Communicate
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However, when they were asked to formulate problem statements that linked their root cause to their area for growth, three of the teams were unable to do so. For example, School B's statement read more like a theory of action than a problem statement: "Teachers can build greater trust through increased planning, sharing, collaborating, time with one another. If they do this, teachers will get to know one another's areas of expertise." For School C, the links were vague: "Our individual strengths and confidences often contribute to less patience and openness to collaboration with our peers to include all our students."

The December 1 workshop attempted to fill this learning gap by focusing almost entirely on the strategic fit between root cause, vision of success, and action planning. The results here were more successful: three of the four groups developed theories of action that were mostly connected to their root causes and their visions of success (the School D team struggled to create a coherent vision of success and problem statement, and therefore never reached the theory of action). However, during the workshop, most groups did not fill out the action-planning template. For some, the stated reason was the absence of other members of the ILT; others saw the document as more of a guide than a formal template for a plan and filled it out until they felt they had a collective sense of what had to be done. Moreover, as noted at the beginning of the Results section, there was no time spent during the workshops on collecting evidence of impact, and thus, no opportunity to build understanding in this area.

In interviews prior to the last workshop, the principals from Schools A and C pointed to growth in some of the practices of improvement cycles as a result of learning

to focus on specific problems. One noted, “The workshops helped focus us and enable us to better attack these things that we’re concerned about. Questions like, ‘what is the root cause?’ got us thinking in different ways.”

“Apply these practices in their schools to improve an area for growth from their 5Essential results.”

I attempted to measure participants’ application of their learning through post-workshop surveys, follow-up observations, and evidence from the final workshop. Following the November 3 and December 1 workshops, I asked participants to assess the degree to which they planned on using practices from the workshops (Appendices 2-4). The practices with the highest planned behavior planned behavior change were Effort-Impact Graph and Embracing Discomfort. The practices with the lowest planned behavior change were Norms and Protocols, which also had the highest reported usage prior to the workshops, suggesting participants were engaging in these practices before the workshops.

On March 2, I asked participants to what extent the workshop sequence led to actual increases in the adaptive and improvement practices identified in my theory of action (Appendix 5). With the exception of low-inference observation, 50% or more of the respondents said that the workshops led to increases in their use of each of the other practices “to a great extent.” In response to a question about how, if at all, their practice changed as a result of the workshops, one participant acknowledged, “the importance of focusing in on action plans and the process of following through.” Another wrote, “I’ve

been a more open listener to others and more aware of making solutions rather than griping.”

In addition, I observed two of the teams’ practices in their schools and observed leaders trying out behaviors consistent with adaptive leadership. These observations began when, following the November 3 workshop, three of the school teams (Schools A, B, and D) facilitated a version of the root cause protocol with all of their staff members on an in-service day. Two of those schools asked me to participate. I attended the sessions at Schools B and D, introducing the survey and the scoring process and then turning over facilitation to the principal and teacher leaders who had participated in my workshops. Following the December 1 meeting and the publishing of school results by the local paper, four schools (Schools A, B, C, and D) held sessions with their PTAs. Again, the principals of Schools B and D asked me to participate, and again, I introduced the survey and then turned facilitation back to the principal and teacher leaders.

At the two all-staff and two PTA sessions, I observed conflict, with some teachers pushing back on the validity of the 5Essentials results and some parents questioning the competency of the school’s leadership and asking to see clear action plans. In response, however, I observed the principals of each school use the conflict to his or her advantage. The principal at School B reached out to one of the union representatives with whom she had previously clashed and invited her to join the ILT and the work on 5Essentials. I watched the principal of School D take ownership in front of staff and parents for how his actions had led to problems in the schools and low scores on the 5Essentials.

In interviews prior to the last workshop, the principals from Schools B and D each described their growth in the practices of adaptive leadership. One noted, “I think the

workshops have put out there that we have challenges with trust and at least put in everyone's mind that there are things we can do to improve that, and that it doesn't fall squarely on the shoulders of one person" (personal communication, February 17, 2015). Due to my relative lack of interaction with the principals at School A, School C, and School E outside of the workshops, I was not in a position to observe improvements in their adaptive leadership, and none of them pointed to growth in adaptive leadership as an outcome of the workshops.

The teams' application of improvement practices was more uneven. Although I asked principals to email finalized action plans to me by December 8, 2014 and sent each principal three follow-up emails over the next few weeks, I only received a partially finished version from School B on December 4, a finalized version from a teacher leader at School A on December 17 (Appendix 1), and a finalized version from School D on February 2. The principal at School C emailed me: "Getting close...we've been walloped with illnesses here, so getting the whole team together to complete it is taking longer than anticipated..." (personal communication, December 16, 2014). He sent me a completed action plan on February 12. School E chose not to complete an action plan at their December 15 make-up workshop.

The types of actions schools planned fell into different groups. Schools B, C, and E (who did not write a formal action plan) all planned specific actions targeted at the entire staff. School A targeted their intervention at department teams. School D took a much broader approach, using the action plan as a way to frame large goals around teacher collaboration.

In interviews, all five of the principals noted that a barrier to action planning was

a lack of district-level coherence. Specifically, they pointed to the difficulty of connecting the 5Essentials work to other professional development they were receiving from a consultant from the University of Illinois Chicago (UIC) on the creation of school improvement plans. The principals reported that some of the language (e.g., root cause) and activities were similar, but other concepts or frames seemed at odds with each other. They felt that no one – district leadership, the UIC consultant, nor I – ever provided the schools with support or direction on how to integrate or reconcile these two lines of support.

Unexpected events also played a role. In December, the flu went around several of the schools, resulting in several School D teachers and all of School E’s team missing the December 1 action-planning workshop. School C’s principal reported that illness also slowed down his school’s ability to generate an action plan after the December 1 session. In addition, several teachers and principals pointed to the two professional development days cancelled in January, due to cold weather, as barriers to implementation of the action plans.

There was also significant variation in the implementation of the action plans. On March 2, I asked participants to “To what extent do you think that your team’s presence here has led to clear actions in your building?” More than half chose “to a great extent,” with the remainder choosing “somewhat” (Appendix 5).

Evidence of actual implementation was less clear. In the final workshop, teams were asked to identify what actions they had taken since creating their action plans, and I merged this data with information gathered from interviews to assess those actions. Two of the schools, Schools A and B, reported that they followed through on nearly

everything in their action plan. School C scheduled two professional development sessions, but was only able to implement one after two professional development days were cancelled because of cold weather. Rather than implement what they thought were vague actions, School D used a professional development day to flesh out an action plan with the entire staff. After planning to create a suggestion box and hold informal staff-principal lunches, School E decided to facilitate staff peace circles instead.

The following synopses describe in more detail what happened at each school:

School-By-School Results	
School	Results
<i>School A</i>	School A sought to improve the degree to which students felt challenged in their classes, and focused their efforts on disciplinary teams (e.g., math or English). At several professional development sessions throughout the school year, they attempted to recreate the 5Essentials workshop sequence with their disciplinary teams. However, rather than just focusing on 5Essentials data, School A encouraged their teams to look at 5Essentials and student data. The principal and teachers reported that different disciplinary teams achieved different levels of progress in the cycle: some were able to plan and implement actions, while others were still stuck on root cause identification or action planning. School A reported on March 2 that those teams who were able to implement actions had seen anecdotal changes in teaching and learning.
<i>School B</i>	In order to address a lack of teacher-teacher trust, School B's team changed the structure of their staff meetings. Starting in December, they began each meeting with a "Rain or Shine" where any member of the staff could say something positive or something negative that had happened to him or her since the last staff meeting. In addition, at one of the two staff meetings every month, members of the school-based 5Essentials team led peace circles, which teachers had previously carried out with students. During the peace circles, staff were placed in diverse groups of six or seven and given four or five questions to answer, with each person in the circle answering every question. Some of the questions focused on light-hearted personal topics (e.g., Where would you most like to travel?) while others were intended to stimulate conversation about teaching and learning (e.g., How do you define rigor?). School B also made a concerted effort to help teachers feel more involved in professional development. The 5Essentials team surveyed staff about professional development topics they were interested and topics on which they had expertise. They then put together a series of teacher-led professional development workshops on Response-To-Intervention. On March 2, School B's team reported anecdotal improvement in the

	interactions between novice and veteran teachers.
<i>School C</i>	After setting a goal of improving teachers' collective responsibility, School C designed two professional development workshops on teacher-teacher communication. However, due to the cancellation of a professional development day in January, they were only able to carry out one of the workshops. During that workshop, the teachers held fishbowl conversations about norms of communication at the school and then debriefed the fishbowl in mixed groups. As of March 2, the 5Essentials team was planning a second workshop that focused on how to manage difficult conversations. On March 2, they reported noticeable, anecdotal changes in the communication between staff members as a result of the first professional development workshop.
<i>School D</i>	As a means to increase the staff's commitment to the school, School D's 5Essentials team used a staff meeting to give teachers a voice in how the principal and ILT could better support their learning. The team set four broad goals: monthly celebration of small improvements, structured time to collaborate with support personnel, support using student data to improve instruction, and cross-grade-level meetings on a consistent basis with a specific set purpose. They then broke the staff into four diverse groups and charged each group with the creation of action plans for each goal. At the March 2 meeting, School D's 5Essentials team had formalized these action plans and was thinking through realistic strategies for implementation. Although School D has not yet implemented any formal actions in their plan, they reported anecdotally on March 2 that the process of including teachers in action planning led to a noticeably different "feeling" among staff.
<i>School E</i>	In order to improve teacher-teacher trust and teacher-principal trust in their building, School E's 5Essentials team planned to create a suggestion box for teacher input and a monthly "Lunch with the Principal" where a small group of teachers would have an informal lunch with the principal. As of the March 2 workshop, however, the team had not followed through with either of these actions. The team facilitated peace circles at one of their staff meetings (in a similar manner as School B), but it was unclear whether or not this action was a result of the 5Essentials workshops. School E's principal did not report any noticeable changes as a result of attending the 5Essentials workshops.

"Teams will improve their school's 5Essentials results in the specific area for growth they targeted and their school's 5Essentials results more broadly."

Unfortunately, the results of the 2015 5Essentials survey were not yet available at the time of writing of this capstone. Although participants from all of the schools except School E reported anecdotal impact from the actions they took, they were less sanguine about whether this impact would show up in this year's 5Essentials results. Following the

March 2 workshop, I asked participants “To what extent do you think that your actions will lead to an increase in your school’s 5Essentials scores?” Eight chose “to a great extent” and eleven chose “somewhat.” A number of teachers and principals said that the timing of this year’s survey – coming at the same time many of the schools were beginning to implement their actions – would likely prevent a significant increase from appearing in the next round of 5Essentials results.

Analysis

My original theory of action posited that two short-term results would follow from workshops that established safe spaces for conflict and were rooted in cycles of improvement. The first short term result – that teams would deepen their understanding of practices in the workshops – proved largely true. Within the workshops and away from the daily grind of the school day, participants reported and demonstrated an improved capacity to practice adaptive leadership and long-term improvement cycles.

There is one major exception to this conclusion. Although I set out to engage the teams in cycles of improvement, I never provided support for how they could collect evidence of impact as they implemented new actions. This was where I came face-to-face with one of the core problems with the 5Essentials data that I identified in my Review of Knowledge for Action: the infrequent release of the data makes it difficult for practitioners to test the efficacy of an action. My theory of action positioned the 5Essentials data as the jumping off point for an improvement cycle, and I assumed that I would have been able to help teams collect formative data to determine what effect their actions were having on the area for growth that they identified. In practice, however, without access to new 5Essentials data, I was unable to overcome this fundamental challenge.

In many ways, this was a strategic choice on my part. I could have worked with teams to create surveys of their staff or students to try and determine impact, but the teams seemed so overwhelmed with planning and executing their action plans, that I was reluctant to assign another time-consuming task. My own capacity was also stretched: I worried that I lacked the expertise to help them construct a valid survey, and with just

eight hours of workshop time, I was concerned about squeezing in additional material.

Analytic Framework

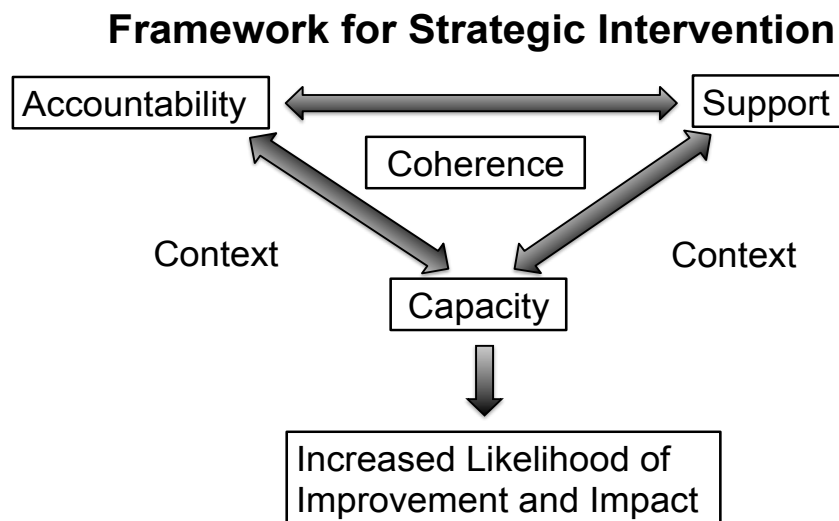
The second short-term result in my theory of action – that teams would apply their learning in their school buildings – was only moderately successful. Outside of the safety of the workshops, school’s capacity to actually implement practices of adaptive leadership and long-term cycles of improvement varied. In order to help understand this variation, I created a strategic framework based on Richard Elmore’s (2002) arguments about the balance between accountability and support:

Accountability must be a reciprocal process. For every increment of performance I demand from you, I have an equal responsibility to provide you with the capacity to meet that expectation. Likewise, for every investment you make in my skill and knowledge, I have a reciprocal responsibility to demonstrate some new increment in performance (p. 5).

In my framework, an actor can use accountability and support to increase the initial capacity of adults on a team or in an organization. Accountability refers to either “external accountability” or the exercise of authority between different actors in the system (i.e. from state to district or community to school) or “internal accountability,” when actors hold themselves accountable. Support refers to an intervention that attempts to increase the capacity of practitioners. Capacity refers to the knowledge, skills, beliefs, social capital, and resources (including time) to perform a given task. I also added two concepts that are not referenced in Elmore’s quote above. Context covers everything outside the scope of the intervention (e.g., other initiatives or unexpected events). Coherence is the degree to which the support, accountability, capacity, and context interact in a synergistic way that makes sense to the practitioners on the ground (Curtis & City, 2009).

The premise behind my framework is that the most effective way to improve the capacity of practitioners is to provide a balance of accountability and support and to frame the work in a coherent way that takes context into account. The framework has broad application to different actors in the system. It can help explain the effort on the part of UChicago Impact, District 65 administrators, and parents to improve the capacity of ILTs to use 5Essentials data for improvement. It can also help explain the effort of school leadership teams to translate those improvements to their staff.

More than anything else, however, the framework makes clear that my theory of action did not account for the ways in which accountability and coherence would either accelerate or constrain a team's ability to apply their learning in their schools.



The following sections examine in more detail how coherence and accountability impacted schools' attempts to apply learning from the workshops.

Coherence

Coherence at each school was a constant challenge for principals. The absence of a clear articulation of the relationship between the 5Essentials and UIC professional development streams complicated an already-complex maze of on-going programs and initiatives, each of which required school-based committees, data collection, and evaluation. With little or no guidance, the work to make sense of these competing initiatives fell to the principals, forcing them to improve coherence by making difficult choices around prioritization: should the 5Essentials be one of the two or three issues that the school and ILT focused on over the course of the year or should it be relegated to more of a supporting role? The principal at School E noted, “I had hoped that the work around the 5Essentials would help me make sense of all of the programs and initiatives I deal with every day. Instead, it became another initiative on top of the pile.”

A lack of data also caused a lack of coherence. The four elementary schools’ lack of survey data on teaching and learning (students must be in 6th grade or higher in order to take the 5Essentials survey), further prevented them from connecting the 5Essentials to the UIC work stream that explicitly focused on teaching and learning. The principals at Schools B, C, and D chose to split the work streams of UIC and 5Essentials, accepting a separation between the two initiatives, but giving both priority through the formation of two subcommittees of the ILT.

Although this structure signaled the importance of the 5Essentials work, the lack of integration created communication challenges between the entire ILT and the members of the 5Essentials subcommittee who participated in the 5Essentials workshops (since the entire ILT was not present). Any time the group at the workshop wanted to make a decision, they first had to consult the entire ILT, which meant finding time during an

already tight, 45-minute biweekly agenda. In most cases, the separation between the ILT members present at the workshops and the entire ILT added another barrier to finalizing and implementing schools' action plans.

School E was the only school where the 5Essentials was clearly relegated to a supporting role. The principal at School E had a prior relationship with the UIC consultant, and unable to draw connections between the two streams of professional development, was concerned that prioritizing the 5Essentials would draw valuable time and resources away from the school's instructional improvement plan. Although the principal created a 5Essentials subcommittee on the ILT, the subcommittee was composed of just two teachers. For this reason, as well as a wave of sickness and family emergencies at key times during the process, School E never prioritized the 5Essentials work. As a result, 5Essentials planning and implementation at School E lagged.

School A, the only middle school and therefore the only school able to focus on an instruction-related Essentials and Measure, was better able than the elementary schools to draw connections between the 5Essentials and UIC work, and grouped both work-streams under their year-long goal of increasing the degree to which students felt challenged.

Accountability

As with coherence, my original theory of action failed to take into account the degree to which members of school leadership teams would feel accountable for creating and implementing action plans or taking advantage of extra support. There were two reasons for this omission. First, I was concerned that using accountability would

jeopardize the integrity of the 5Essentials results in those schools. Donald T. Campbell (1979) argues this in what has come to be referred to as Campbell's Law: "The more any quantitative social indicator is used for social decision-making, the more subject it will be to corruption pressures and the more apt it will be to distort and corrupt the social processes it is intended to monitor." The idea here is that when stakes are attached to a social indicator (like a survey measure), participants are more likely to manipulate the outcomes measured by the indicator. Indeed, in New York, where school climate surveys make up fifteen percent of a school's overall report card grade, several principals have pressured teachers to rate the school highly (Chapman, 2013). Second, I assumed that as an outside provider, I would be unable to provide accountability, and that participating schools would be intrinsically motivated to accept the support and implement action plans.

Although I did not intentionally initiate any accountability for improving 5Essentials results, pressure from other stakeholders did impact the actions of Schools B and D. Each of those schools entered the workshops with low scores on their 5Essentials results from the previous school year. As a result, their ILTs felt significant pressure to develop a plan to improve their 5Essentials data. Some of this accountability came from the district: the time devoted to the 5Essentials during principal professional development and at board meetings sent a clear message to principals that this was data to which the district was paying attention.

The bulk of the accountability, however, came from parents. After the data went public on October 31, 2014, and particularly, after the *Evanston Roundtable* published the results for all schools on December 4, Schools B and D were under pressure from

their PTAs to explain why their 5Essentials results were low and how they planned on improving them. One of the principals from these schools noted, “When the data was published in the *Evanston Roundtable*, I felt like I had a target on my back” (personal communication, February 25, 2015).

This pressure motivated the principals of Schools B and D to take advantage of the extra support that I offered all of the teams. These principals recognized that, like the other principals, they didn’t have enough technical understanding of the 5Essentials data to explain the scoring process and answer questions from frustrated parents and staff. Since there was no time spent during the workshops around how to communicate the 5Essentials data to the broader community, they relied on me to explain the results at their PTA meetings.

The external accountability from parents and district administrators ensured that amid a myriad of competing initiatives in the school, 5Essentials data received priority: throughout the process, the teams from Schools B and D knew they would have to document progress with their action plans for external audiences.

Schools A, C, and E had relatively satisfactory 5Essentials results from the previous year, and as a result, had considerably less external accountability from the district and parents. For these schools, the district’s partnership with UChicago Impact authorized them to prioritize the 5Essentials work, but the lack of pressure meant prioritization was not required. Schools A and C decided to prioritize the 5Essentials work after identifying potential structures to make the work somewhat coherent and successful. With no external accountability, Schools A and C relied on internal accountability to motivate their follow-through. Both schools, along with Schools B and

D, held sessions with staff in October at which they presented the 5Essentials results and discussed the work they planned to do over the course of the year. Each school reported that once they had publicly committed to lead this body of work, they felt responsible for following through. In addition, the schools reported that the presence of an after-action review workshop, where schools knew they would analyze and present their actions to each other and to me, made them feel pressure to accomplish something between December, 2014 and February, 2015.

School E deprioritized the work at the beginning of the year, never held a formal PTA meeting on the data, and only presented to staff in January. Moreover, School E missed the December 1 action-planning workshop and never completed an action plan. With no external accountability and no desire to create internal accountability due to understandable concerns about coherence and capacity, the 5Essentials work largely stalled at School E.

Capacity and Integration

My theory of action assumed that if ILT's deepened their understanding of specific practices, they would apply these practices in their schools to a 5Essentials area for growth. I did not consider, however, the complexity inherent in transferring this capacity from a small group of workshop participants to the larger staff. With only three to five members of the ILT attending the workshops, in order to lead whole-school action, participants had to first update the rest of their ILT on the learning and planning they had missed. Then, the whole ILT faced the same set of challenges outlined in my analytic framework: they had to provide targeted support, create internal accountability,

find time in a packed professional development schedule, and articulate how the intervention fit with the school's other initiatives.

Interestingly, the actions taken by ILTs in each of these areas were influenced by the system-level actions from the district, parents, and support organizations. When teams presented their 5Essentials results to their staff, they increased internal accountability for the continuation of the work, but the presentations were more likely to take place in schools that faced external accountability from the district and parent groups. When teams designed professional development for their staff, they often replicated the support they received at the 5Essentials workshops, using the same agendas, PowerPoint presentations, and materials. Finally, when teams allotted time and attempted to create coherence for the 5Essentials work, they were influenced by the district's articulation how the work fit into other school and district initiatives.

Given these complexities, there was wide variation in teams' capacity to actually apply their learning to improve a 5Essentials area for growth. Two of the schools, Schools A and B, developed the capacity to plan and implement fairly significant changes connected to their 5Essentials data and produced anecdotal evidence of impact. Two other schools, Schools C and D, developed the capacity to plan actions that might lead to impact, but were less successful at implementation. At School E, the work did not move forward at all.

School-By-School Analysis	
School	Analysis
<i>School A</i>	School A was the only middle school in the pilot and thus, the only school with survey data from students on the Supportive Environment and Ambitious Instruction Essentials. Focusing on this data enabled School A to create greater levels of coherence with the professional development from UIC and to implement actions at the instructional team level. Like School C, School A had little external accountability, but created internal accountability

	with early presentations to the staff and parents. School A repurposed the concepts and materials from the workshops in order to apply the same learning cycle with instructional teams. School A's principal and teachers reported that the implementation had been uneven, with some teams already implementing action plans that anecdotally led to noticeable changes in instruction, while other teams are struggled to coalesce around a root cause.
<i>School B</i>	School B's low scores on the previous year's 5Essentials survey drew pressure from administrators and parents to develop and implement a plan to improve the scores. As a result, School B gave the 5Essentials work priority over other initiatives and split the ILT into two subcommittees, with one focused exclusively on the 5Essentials. Although this team struggled at first to communicate their learning to skeptical staff members and parents, they persevered, planning and implementing three discrete actions targeted at improving teacher-teacher trust. The team reported that their actions have led to an anecdotal improvement in teacher-teacher and teacher-principal trust.
<i>School C</i>	School C did not face external accountability to improve their scores like Schools B and D, and unlike School A, they were not able to create coherence between the 5Essentials and the instructional work with UIC. However, early on, School C presented their 5Essentials data and the scope of the workshops to staff and parents, creating internal accountability. In addition, like Schools B and D, School C split their ILT into subcommittees, with one focused on improving the 5Essentials. School C's action step was clear and achievable – designing and implementing professional development for the staff on collegial communication. After their first session, teachers and principal reported a marked improvement in the way teachers interacted with each other.
<i>School D</i>	Like School B, School D began the school year with low scores on the 5Essentials, particularly around Effective Leaders and Collaborative Teachers. These results led to pressure from district leadership and the PTA to develop and implement a plan to improve the scores. However, due to low teacher attendance at the December 1 workshop, School D was unable to complete an action plan, pushing the planning into January. In the end, School D created four broad action buckets and had staff fill in the specifics under each. At the time of this writing, they were beginning to implement that plan.
<i>School E</i>	From the start of the workshops, School E was overwhelmed by several district- and school-level initiatives, particularly the coexistence of two different professional development sequences targeted at the ILT. Without any pressure to improve their 5Essentials scores and without support to integrate the 5Essentials work into existing work-streams, School E made the decision to deprioritize the 5Essentials. Although School E's lack of prioritization for the 5Essentials could have been a missed opportunity, it is possible (if not likely) that School E's decision improved its overall coherence and was therefore in the school's best interest.

Returning to the Research

In the Review of Knowledge for Action section, I identified two core problems that were preventing practitioners from using 5Essentials data.

1. The complex social problems rooted in the data require unintuitive planning, collective action, and challenging conversations across lines of authority, which make the data hard to influence.
2. The infrequent administration and release of survey data make it challenging for schools to collect new data and adjust their actions accordingly.

The primary question was whether, with targeted support, leadership teams could overcome these challenges to use 5Essentials data to improve their schools. My analysis of the project's results suggests that teams were better able to overcome the first problem than the second. With added accountability for schools with low incoming 5Essentials results and support around norms, protocols, and low-inference data analysis, school teams, even those schools with relatively low levels of initial capacity, were able to have difficult conversations and coalesce around a plan for improvement. School B, one of the schools with low incoming 5Essentials scores, was able to take collective action to address the problem of low teacher-teacher trust.

There is a significant caveat to this conclusion. It is important to note that Evanston's schools may have higher initial levels of capacity than schools in other districts. District 65 adopted the 5Essentials framework for its strategic plan, has relatively high teacher and principal salaries that enable it to attract talent, and has a myriad of community supports for schools. It is unclear whether or not schools with low capacity and other contextual challenges could use the 5Essentials data as effectively as

schools in District 65.

The second challenge, raised by Bryk (2013), was more formidable. Support around root cause analysis and action planning enabled teams to use the data as a jumping off point for focused action. However, when it came time to complete the improvement cycle by measuring the impact of the teams' actions, the absence of new data proved insurmountable. Moreover, since schools used only anecdotal evidence of impact during the after-action review, it is unclear whether they were able to make informed adjustments to their action plans. This limitation is particularly salient given the nature of schools' actions, which (except for School A) were not closely connected to improving teaching and learning. Even if staff peace circles lead to more collegial trust, the path from trust to improved student learning is indirect, and takes time to impact measurable student outcomes.

Implications for Site

A central finding from this capstone is that with a relatively small (8-hour) intervention, UChicago Impact can help schools use 5Essentials results to *begin* addressing adaptive problems of practice. What is unclear is whether this initial work can lead to quantifiable changes in schools, as measured by improvements in 5Essentials results. Given the myriad of other factors influencing schools, there is good reason for skepticism. In this section, I recommend several ways that UChicago Impact can improve the next round of 5Essentials workshops based on my findings.

Intentionally develop internal and external accountability

Internal and external accountability played significant roles in determining which schools organized to move the work forward. One of my findings is that leaders were able to create internal accountability when they presented the 5Essentials work to their staff. Although I did not encourage schools to make these presentations, UChicago Impact can make this an expectation for schools, providing them with an achievable agenda and presentation template to use for this purpose.

For an outside entity like UChicago Impact, creating external accountability is tricky. In the case of Evanston, two of the schools felt the pressures of external accountability from parents due to the public nature of the data and the resulting media coverage. However, some of these enabling factors are specific to Evanston since many 5Essentials clients do not make their data public, do not prioritize it at the district level, and do not have media outlets that closely follow education. Each of these distinctions

represents a potential source of external accountability that UChicago Impact can push for as part of initial partnership agreements with new districts.

Another way to generate more accountability is to include parent representatives or district administrators in the action-planning workshop. This would not only bring other important actors to the table, but would also bring in other stakeholders who can hold the principal and ILT accountable. If parents or district administrators had been present at School E's make-up action planning workshop, there is a greater likelihood the school would have prioritized the work.

Provide coaching to targeted schools

UChicago Impact needs to be careful that accountability does not outstrip the support they are able to provide: if levels of accountability become too severe, there will be little prospect for real changes in behavior and outcomes. Specifically, one rather alarming finding is that the workshops themselves do not provide enough support for principals with low 5Essentials scores to communicate survey results and facilitate productive conversations with skeptical audiences. The organization may want to consider a limited form of coaching specifically for this purpose. UChicago Impact could conceivably provide coaching at a reasonable price to principals or ILTs with low Effective Leaders scores (i.e. below 25) who work in districts where there is some form of external accountability from parents or district administrators. If the organization trains 70 ILTs next year, this would mean offering coaching to between 10 and 15 principals or ILTs, something that could be handled by a Senior Education Manager and a consultant at UChicago Impact.

Integrate the 5Essentials with other district initiatives

It is also essential for UChicago Impact to create more coherence between 5Essentials work and other initiatives that impact schools. In my strategic project, School E was burdened with countless other district and school initiatives and had no understanding of where the 5Essentials fit. Without any support around this lack of coherence, making School E accountable for the design and implementation of actions connected to the 5Essentials data would have likely led to more anxiety and a compliance-driven product.

In order to create more coherence, UChicago Impact should consider several changes to the workshop sequence. The organization may want to consider designing and then requiring or recommending that district administrators attend a workshop at the beginning of the sequence that aims to build coherence. The session could educate district administrators about the 5Essentials, give them structured time to map the 5Essentials framework and workshops onto their current slate of initiatives, and facilitate discussions about effective ways to communicate the relationships between initiatives to ILTs.

Another option is to attack the problem of coherence at the school level. Rather than targeting 5Essentials at the improvement of specific 5Essentials Measures, the workshops could more intentionally position the 5Essentials as a framework to help schools structure and evaluate initiatives and programs. Instead of having the leadership team create an action plan focused on one growth area, this approach would have the team take a much broader view of their work, surveying the data to make broader decisions about prioritization. A simpler shift for the organization would be to include

fifteen minutes to an early workshop for ILTs to figure out where the 5Essentials work fits into their existing systems.

Whatever direction UChicago Impact chooses to take, the issue of coherence between 5Essentials and other initiatives is a significant barrier to its ability to lead reliable change in different contexts and deserves the organization's attention moving forward.

Extend the workshop sequence

Another important finding from the capstone was that the limited nature of the intervention did not sufficiently build schools' capacities to collect meaningful formative data on the impact of their actions. I believe that without a significant expansion to the dosage (total time) of the intervention, UChicago Impact will struggle to effectively prepare schools to collect and analyze valid formative data. My recommendation is that the organization accept this limitation and continue to rely on anecdotal assessments of impact in the after-action review. However, UChicago Impact should then follow that workshop with a more formal return to root cause analysis and action planning in April or May based on a new round of 5Essentials results. This would give teams the opportunity to go through one full improvement cycle over the course of a school year.

Be slow and deliberate

Above all else, the primary task for UChicago Impact is to demonstrate that its workshops can reliably improve schools' 5Essentials results. In order to do this, the organization needs resist the temptation to scale before it can demonstrate quantifiable

impact. In other words, UChicago Impact should follow the same playbook it recommends to schools: careful, cautious cycles of improvement that.

Implications for Sector

Over the past decade, the sector has made strides in the development of an infrastructure to measure (e.g., PARCC and Smarter Balance) and support improvements (e.g., Achievement Network and Research for Better Teaching) in teaching and learning. However, findings in *Organizing Schools for Improvement* (2010) suggest that in order to generate sustainable improvements in teaching and learning, schools first need to first create strong relationships between principals, teachers, students, and families. My strategic project sought to use survey data to build these relationships. During my residency, I saw the 5Essentials data shed light on aspects of school culture that leadership teams were previously afraid to talk about. With some norms and structure, the student and teacher survey data helped move the conversation from one bold teacher speculating that there is a problem with “trust” to a group of practitioners working together to address a clearly defined problem. However, my findings suggest that the sector still needs to learn how often and in what contexts these powerful conversations actually lead to improvements in student outcomes.

Create careful structures for external accountability

If we want practitioners to pay attention to leading indicators of test score growth, we have to integrate those indicators into formal (i.e. school report cards) and informal (i.e. making the data public) systems of external accountability. A few districts (e.g., Chicago or New York) include student and teacher survey results in their school accountability systems, but they comprise a relatively small portion of the sector.

Using survey results for external accountability has several implications. First, organizations must design surveys to be more resistant to manipulation. Currently, it is too easy for a principal to pressure teachers or students to respond favorably on surveys. One possible solution to this challenge is to ask teachers and students at the end of the survey whether they felt pressured to answer in a certain way, and to investigate schools with high positive responses to the question.

Provide external facilitation to targeted schools

If we are going to hold schools accountable for survey results, we also have to build their capacity to improve those results in meaningful ways. This support can take several forms, but perhaps the most important is protected time with an outside facilitator. Schools are places with complex power relations; I saw this first-hand at PTA meetings with parents, teachers, community members, and the principal, with each asserting different degrees of formal and informal authority. In many schools, when passionate practitioners with different perspectives get together to talk about unflattering data that implicates a key stakeholder, a skillful mediator can significantly improve the productivity of the conversation.

Providing this type of support reliably across the sector is not an easy undertaking, and would require a significant increase in support. However, much like the recommendation I provided to UChicago Impact around coaching principals, the support could be targeted. For example, if the only schools that participated in workshops were those that fell between the bottom 10% and 30% of the surveys, the scale would become more manageable. These schools would not be those slated for turnaround, which would

likely need a more intensive intervention, but rather would be schools with baseline levels of capacity that are nonetheless struggling to improve.

Expand surveys to central offices and non-profits

Nevertheless, if this support is provided without any concern for coherence, the impact of the support will be minimal or negative. In order for this work to have coherence at the school level, districts and states need to begin asking the same questions: What is the capacity for adaptive leadership and improvement cycles at those levels? How are we holding superintendents accountable for improving the social capital of central offices? A next step for the sector could be the creation of a 5Essentials-like survey for principals and central office employees that focuses on many of the same climate and culture issues that we care about in schools. Although an evidence-based specific to these sector-level organizations does not exist yet, there is research from other sectors that could support the survey's development.

Make survey data timely

Without the targeted support described earlier in this section, it is unlikely that schools will be able to use the current iteration of survey data in the sector. Even with targeted support, though, there is a ceiling on the degree to which schools can truly engage in focused improvement. In order for improvement to happen at scale, student and teacher survey data have to become timely. Imagine a world where schools were accountable for their climate and culture data, and received data every five weeks, like On-Track, so that principals, teachers, parents, and students could test different strategies

and find out immediately whether or not they were working. The technology is not there yet, but with students' increasing access to smart phones, monthly multiple-choice questions may soon become a real possibility.

Conclusion

Inherent in my strategic project is a fundamental question of prioritization. With lots of data sources to choose from and very little time to develop practitioners' capacity to use that data, should we prioritize the use of teacher and student survey data? Although the limited scope of my project cautions against definitive answers, the results suggest that this data and our accompanying support represent a promising, though still emerging, addition to the field.

Given the limited dosage of support (8 hours of professional development), my findings suggest that the right balance of support, coherence, and accountability can help schools begin to use teacher and student survey data to have productive conversations across lines of authority by slowly building trust and social capital. Whether these productive conversations can lead to sustained improvement, however, is unclear, and further development, research, and cycles of improvement are necessary in order to assess long-term impact.

Most importantly, though, my findings suggest that we need to learn how to coherently integrate student and teacher survey data with other forms of data. This will not be easy. Many schools receive three distinct forms of data: assessments of student learning (e.g., PARCC), attainment (e.g., On-Track), and culture (e.g., 5Essentials). Each of these data requires different modes of analysis, cycles of improvement, and groupings of practitioners. Given schools' limited capacity for engaging in improvement processes, we need to more clearly define how schools should use and prioritize these different forms of data. Until we do so, the path to school-level improvement will remain unclear.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – School A 5Essentials Action Plan

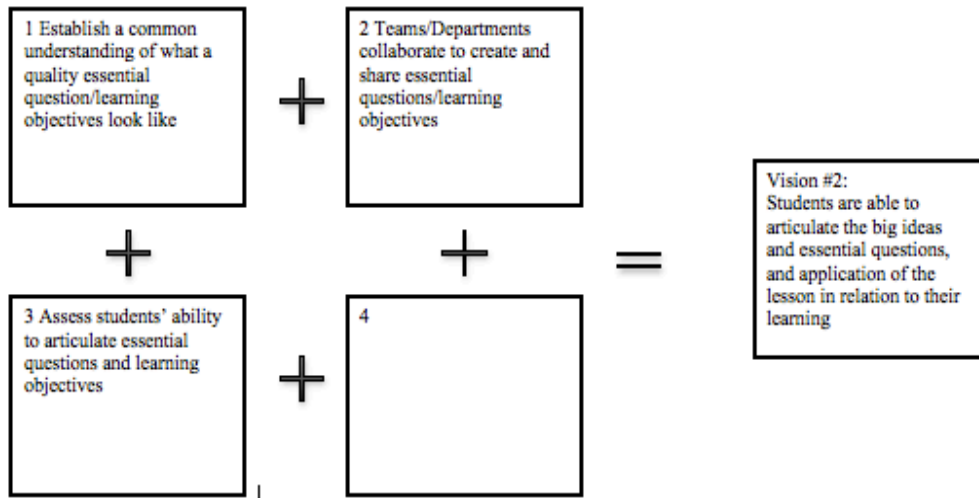
5Essentials Summary – School

A December 2014

What are we doing and why?

Essential: Supportive Environment	Measure: Academic Press
Root Cause: In an effort to differentiate, we may have lowered the expectations we communicate to students. If students aren't clear on learning expectations, they may not feel challenged.	
Vision for Success: 1. High level questioning from both teacher and students. 2. Students are able to articulate the big ideas/essential questions and application of the lesson in relation to their learning. 3. Consistent and <u>high level</u> behavioral and academic expectations.	

Theory of Action:



School A 5Essentials Action Plan

How will we implement the plan and collect evidence of its impact?

Actions <i>What are the major actions you'll be taking to achieve your vision of success?</i>	Sub-Action/Deliverable <i>What sub-actions or deliverables are necessary to effectively implement these actions?</i>	Owner <i>Who will be responsible for executing the sub-actions and collecting evidence of success?</i>	Completion Date <i>When will each of these sub-actions or deliverables be completed?</i>	Evidence <i>What evidence will we collect to determine impact by February 15?</i>
<i>e.g. Select a representative team of teachers to plan PD</i>	<i>Send email to staff asking for volunteers</i>	<i>Matt Harris, Principal</i>	<i>December 1st</i>	<i>Survey staff on whether PD team is representative</i>
	<i>Select teachers with different experience, roles, philosophies</i>	<i>Matt Harris, Principal</i>	<i>December 7th</i>	
Box 1 Establish a common understanding of what a quality essential question/learning objectives look like.	<i>Add to agenda for department and or grade level teams</i>	<i>Principal, department chairs</i>	<i>January 2015</i>	<i>Model/Examples</i>
	<i>Focus topic for PLC groups</i>	<i>ILT</i>	<i>Jan/Feb 2015</i>	<i>Articles and videos</i>
Box 2 Teams/Departments collaborate to create and share essential questions/learning objectives.	<i>Add to agenda of January Department Meeting</i>	<i>Department Chair</i>	<i>January/Feb 2015</i>	
	<i>Team meeting</i>	<i>Team Leaders/ILT</i>	<i>January/Feb 2015</i>	
Box 3 Assess students' ability to articulate essential questions and learning objectives.	<i>Collect data through informal walk-throughs</i>	<i>Asst. Principals</i>	<i>May 2015</i>	<i>Walk through tool</i>
	<i>Student feedback – are students able to articulate or reflect the big idea in class</i>	<i>School A staff</i>	<i>May 2015</i>	<i>Student feedback – written and verbal communication of objectives</i>

5Essentials Communication Plan

How will we communicate our plan to stakeholders?



Audience <i>Who do you need to introduce your action plan to?</i>	Presenter <i>Who will present the action plan?</i>	Products <i>What products will the presenter need for the presentation?</i>	Presentation Date <i>When will the presentation take place?</i>
<i>e.g. Instructional Leadership Team</i>	<i>Principal and Assistant Principal</i>	<i>Power Point, Agenda, One-Page Summary</i>	<i>December 1st</i>
All School A staff	ILT and Principal	One-page summary/copy of action plan	Half-Day January 14 th , 2015



Appendix 2 – November 3 Workshop Feedback

1. What worked well from this session? Please be specific.

- Framework for discussion
- Time to work with team
- Organization of the meeting – good, meaningful topics
- Discussions that were emotional and difficult
- The clarity that was given and the guidance
- Guided, structured conversations that still allowed for lots of individual discussion
- Great conversations, valuable time to talk
- I really enjoyed the breakdown step by step
- Food and drink
- Sharing and discussions about difficult issues
- Discussion time with plenty of time to collaborate and hear from each other
- Transitions from one question to another
- Time to talk with my school
- The opportunity to brainstorm together
- The facilitation of discussion was fantastic
- The structure and timing worked well
- The reflection on last session's feedback
Team was very open to share and reflect
- The process of determining areas of growth and root causes
- Content and support for dialogue
- The brainstorming worksheet allowed staff to analyze an area for growth
- Having time to think individually before sharing

2. What didn't work well? Please be specific.

- Did not get to action planning
- Unclear at times what we were to vote on
- Sometimes I needed more of a reminder of what our mission was at any given step
- Not enough time to discuss – hard to only pick one thing to work on when I wanted something else
- Coming to the root cause was difficult
- We didn't have enough time – it seemed rushed
- Not enough time to action plan
- More time to share strategies across schools
- Not enough time

- This was a really great start, but I'm concerned what the follow-through will look like – that it will happen fully

3. What changes would you suggest? Please be specific.

- Provide exemplars? Here is how one school took this measure and developed an action plan.
- More time to discuss
- More clarity
- Say twice what we need to do – don't count on our memory of last week's work
- Add a self-guided action – I will..... We will.....
- A timeline for committing to follow-through
- Follow-up sessions to talk about our work
- More time...would have been good to plan to take this work to the staff
- More one-on-one help from the facilitators
- Accepting the feeling of discomfort and that this work is ongoing
- Need more time to discuss area of growth because it is so important
- More time to share strategies across schools
- More time to brainstorm specific areas for growth
- More time

4. What learning did you share with your team?

- We need to do a better job with mainstreaming
- I think our problems start with principal-teacher trust
- Step away from the data sometimes
- Need to slow down
- My honest thoughts – that finding solutions is a process – different stakeholders have different perspectives
- It is important to be open and honest about feelings
- Be more vulnerable around growth areas
- Learning that there is a strong desire to build a more socially connected school
- Creating action plans and ways to communicate 5Essentials with staff
- We need to slow down
- I was surprised that everyone was ready to talk about trust
- Go slow to go fast
- Staff members are ready to talk about growing trust
- It's ok to disagree and have a difficult conversation
- The importance of social events to establish trust
- Importance of taking the time to ID a problem and solve it
- The importance of listening to each other

5. What commitment did you share with your team?

- I'm willing to sit with discomfort
- Being open to change in procedures – making time to address issues and implement action plans
- To make sure to acknowledge the great work of other staff members and tell them about it
- Commitment to be flexible to engage in challenging and uncomfortable conversations
- Turn criticism into actionable items
- Slow down, reflect, and then act
- I will always be present and honest for this work
- Pause, reflect, and respond
- To continue to strive to be less alpha and more patient
- To be honest no matter how uncomfortable
- Help keep up momentum
- Celebrating teachers and providing a suggestion box for ways to build community
- Flexible – stay positive
- Being positive – wanting to help my school/staff make changes for the better
- To be honest and thoughtful
- Committing to be open and listen
- More reflection on specific parts of my learning
- Consistent, focused ILT meetings
- Listen to others and be ready to be a team member
- Reach out more to help changes moving in the positive direction

6. How would you rate the Nov. 3 sessions overall?

1	2	3	4	5
			11	11

7. How would you rate the facilitation for this session?

1	2	3	4	5
			6	16

8. How would you rate the area for growth/root cause protocol?

1	2	3	4	5
			9	12

9. How would you rate the action planning protocol?

1	2	3	4	5
		2	5	11

10. To what extent had your ILT/team previously discussed your area for growth?

<i>Not at all Extent</i>	<i>Very Little</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>To a Great</i>
2	5	8	6

11. To what extent did the structure of these sessions enable you to discuss it?

<i>Not at all Extent</i>	<i>Very Little</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>To a Great</i>
		7	15

12. Prior to these two sessions, to what extent did you use the following in meetings that you lead/facilitate?

	<i>Never</i>	<i>A Little</i>	<i>Often</i>
Norms - <i>Always</i>	1	5	8
			6
Protocols - <i>Always</i>	1	6	10
			4
Low-Inference Observations - <i>Always</i>	5	8	6
			0
Purposeful Reflection - <i>Always</i>	2	9	8
			1
Celebration - <i>Always</i>	3	7	5
			6

Embracing Discomfort -	<i>Never</i>	<i>A Little</i>	<i>Often</i>
<i>Always</i>			
	9	9	3

0

Problem/Root Cause Definition -	<i>Never</i>	<i>A Little</i>	<i>Often</i>
<i>Always</i>			
	6	7	5

0

Action Planning -	<i>Never</i>	<i>A Little</i>	<i>Often</i>
<i>Always</i>			
	2	7	8

1

13. Following these two sessions, to what extent will you use the following in meetings that you lead/facilitate?

Norms -	<i>Never</i>	<i>A Little</i>	<i>Often</i>
<i>Always</i>			
		1	6

12

Protocols -	<i>Never</i>	<i>A Little</i>	<i>Often</i>
<i>Always</i>			
		1	8

10

Low-Inference Observations -	<i>Never</i>	<i>A Little</i>	<i>Often</i>
<i>Always</i>			
		4	12

2

Purposeful Reflection -	<i>Never</i>	<i>A Little</i>	<i>Often</i>
<i>Always</i>			
		2	11

6

Celebration -	<i>Never</i>	<i>A Little</i>	<i>Often</i>
<i>Always</i>		0	10
		9	

Embracing Discomfort -	<i>Never</i>	<i>A Little</i>	<i>Often</i>
<i>Always</i>		1	17
		1	

Problem/Root Cause Definition -	<i>Never</i>	<i>A Little</i>	<i>Often</i>
<i>Always</i>		4	10
		4	

Action Planning -	<i>Never</i>	<i>A Little</i>	<i>Often</i>
<i>Always</i>		0	14
		5	

14. To what extent do you think these sessions will make you more likely to tackle uncomfortable topics in the future?

<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Very Little</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>To a Great</i>
<i>Extent</i>			
		10	9

15. How likely do you think it is that your team will implement a version of the action you created today?

<i>Not likely</i>	<i>Somewhat Likely</i>	<i>Likely</i>	<i>Very Likely</i>
		9	10

16. Following these sessions, how useful do you think the 5Essentilas are for:

Establishing Priorities for Improv.	<i>Not at all</i>	<i>A little</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>
<i>Extremely</i>			
			5
14			

Developing School Improv. Plans *Not at all* *A little* *Somewhat*
Extremely

9

10

Helping Me Be More Effective *Not at all* *A little* *Somewhat*
Extremely

5

14

Improving Student Outcomes *Not at all* *A little* *Somewhat*
Extremely

10

9

Appendix 3 – December 1 Workshop Feedback

1. What worked well from this workshop? Please be specific.

- Guided conversations to tackle the root cause
- Developing the action plan – rating the steps for impact and effort, discussions around this
- Action planning being specifically tied to goals and how to get there
- I appreciate the structure and templates
- Specific instruction for each section
- Lots of work, less ice-breakers and getting to know you stuff.
- Forcing us to make a solid action plan.
- Time to work with specific plans
- Time allotted to figure out action steps
- Very clear expectations... great process that we can take back to staff
- The sequencing of steps and the hi/lo graphic organizer
- Time with team
- Very organized. I love the 5E summary and action plan tools/organizer
- Time with team/collaborating/trying to be on the same page

2. What didn't work well? Please be specific.

- Limited time for in-depth discussion with each step of the process
- Time – after long weekend
- At first I wasn't sure what to focus on
- Not enough time. We burned out a bit early. This was heavy stuff!
- Plans were specific, but an exemplar would help (there was one for theory of action) but maybe one for the four quadrants
- Time – as always, not enough
- Too many heavy tasks
- A lot going on – felt overwhelming at times.

1. What changes would you suggest? Please be specific.

- More facilitators to summarize and redirect conversations
- Maybe doing some work before the meeting – select times in the last meeting that we would work on this in individual teams before this meeting.
- Action plan and next steps
- More time to work on theory of action with added pressure to share out
- Provide some sample actions as an activity/scenario – have us place them on the quadrant
- Break this into two sessions
- Break down into smaller sessions

2. What is one learning or observation you will take back to your school from today's session?

- Taking time to listen and ask questions in order to understand fully what is being said
- Theory of action
- Dot voting
- Guided conversations
- We will be using the action and 5E summary sheet to have staff follow up and set goals for one area of improvement
- Theory of action / Effort/Impact graph
- Implementing action plans – specific steps and dates to do so
- Leaving with an action plan frames the mindset for taking next steps
- I need to talk less
- Effort/impact graph chart really helps negate ideas that normally end up on lists
- The flowchart was helpful to get us to break everything into actual action
- Looking at action items on the effort-impact graph

3. How would you rate this workshop overall?

1	2	3	4	5
			6	8

4. How would you rate the facilitation for this workshop?

1	2	3	4	5
		1	4	9

5. To what extent did the work you did today build on the work you did in previous sessions?

<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Very Little</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>To a Great Extent</i>
		2	12

6. Which component of today's workshop did you find the most helpful?

<i>Effort/Impact Graph</i>	<i>Theory of Action</i>	<i>Action and Communication</i>
<i>Planning</i>		
3	5	7

7. Which component of today's workshop did you find the least helpful?

<i>Effort/Impact Graph</i>	<i>Theory of Action</i>	<i>Action and Communication</i>
<i>Planning</i>		

2 5 4

8. How useful did you find creating the vision for success?

Not at all *Very Little* *Somewhat* *To a Great Extent*

5 4

9. Prior to this workshop, to what extent did you use the following in your leadership role?

Effort/Impact Graph -	<i>Never</i>	<i>A Little</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Always</i>
	8	1	2	
Theory of Action -	<i>Never</i>	<i>A Little</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Always</i>
	3	5	4	
Action Planning -	<i>Never</i>	<i>A Little</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Always</i>
	3	2	5	
Communication Planning -	<i>Never</i>	<i>A Little</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Always</i>
	3	3	6	

10. Following this workshop, to what extent will you use the following in your leadership role?

Effort/Impact Graph -	<i>Never</i>	<i>A Little</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Always</i>
		4	8	
Theory of Action -	<i>Never</i>	<i>A Little</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Always</i>
	1	2	6	2
Action Planning -	<i>Never</i>	<i>A Little</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Always</i>
		1	5	6
Communication Planning -	<i>Never</i>	<i>A Little</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Always</i>
		1	9	2

11. To what extent do you believe that the action plan you created today....

Will lead to your vision of success?

Not at all *Somewhat Likely* *Likely* *Extremely*

Likely

2 7 3

Is realistic given your school’s capacity?

<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Somewhat Likely</i>	<i>Likely</i>	<i>Extremely</i>
<i>Likely</i>			
	2	9	1

12. How likely do you think it is that your team will implement the action plan you created today?

<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Somewhat Likely</i>	<i>Likely</i>	<i>Extremely</i>
<i>Likely</i>			
	1	4	7

13. How interested would you be in attending another UChicago Impact Session?

<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Somewhat Likely</i>	<i>Likely</i>	<i>Extremely</i>
<i>Likely</i>			
		1	11

Appendix 4 - Results from November 3 and December 1 Feedback

Note: Following the November 3 workshop, I asked participants (n=23) to assess the degree to which they used eight critical practices from the sessions before the sessions and the degree to which they planned to use these practices after attending two sessions. For each practice, they could select from four options: never, a little, often, or always. I calculated the difference between their use of the practices before and intent to use after the sessions – an average change of 1.0 meant that the average participant shifted his or her response one category – from “never” to “a little” or “often” to “always.”

November 3 Workshop			
Practices	Use Before Workshop	Intent to Use After Workshop	Average Change
Norms	3.0	3.6	0.6
Protocols	2.8	3.5	0.7
Low-Inference Observations	2.1	2.9	0.8
Purposeful Reflection	2.4	3.2	0.8
Celebration	2.7	3.5	0.8
Embracing Discomfort	1.7	3.0	1.3
Problem/Root Cause Definition	1.9	3.0	1.1
Action Planning	2.4	3.3	0.8
December 1 Workshop			
Effort-Impact Graph	1.4	2.7	1.3
Theory of Action	2.1	2.8	0.8
Action Planning	2.5	3.4	1.1
Communication Planning	2.3	3.1	0.8

Appendix 5 – March 2nd Workshop Feedback

1. What worked well from this workshop? Please be specific.

- Time to discuss and plan!
- Specific steps for action plan
- Great structure provided
- Very specific expectations focused around a goal
- The review- step by step
- Working time together
- Good set up and framing of how to solve/address
- Also, time budgeting
- Structure, time limits, clear directions
- Glow and Grow
- Time to collaborate with team and break down info step by step
- Time to self-examine and reevaluate our goals
- The guidance of the facilitators when answers to questions posed are vague.
- The opportunity to collaborate with team members to determine what/why/why not things are working.
- Identifying progress and growth over the past few months.
- The activity of looking at what we've done and what we plan to do worked well and helped us plan for our next steps.
- Going over what worked and what didn't.
- Lots of time to discuss in groups.
- Looking over our action plan and really thinking about what we were successful and why and areas for improvement.
- Very specific questions and targeted things to think about within those questions.
- Clear objectives for plans, actions, reflections.
- Feedback and pointing out (focus) what we talked/worked on.
- It worked well that these use appropriate time allocation for tasks.
- Tasks were balanced with naming pluses and minuses.
- Continued use and modeling of protocols for handling ideas, data, and process.
- Time to reflect on action plan and time to plan next steps.
- Using the protocols helped create a useful framework to build upon.
- Also a transferable system for other situations.

2. What didn't work well? Please be specific.

- We still need guidance/practice on root cause
- Need more markers to make prettier posters
- Having more time.

- All worked! Very helpful today and looking at both glasses- full and empty.
- More time was needed for discussing our next steps.
- A question wasn't asked that would have allowed me to share what I wanted- I held back a little.
- Less time to plan further.
- Figuring out how to make ILT (info that is collected) more transparent and finding time to share with staff.
- Amount of time is always a challenge ☺
- Need more practice with procedures and format of the meeting so we can implement it at our school.
- I would have loved some more time and direction for thinking about our pivot as we approach the end of the year. 5 staff meetings plus two days- what's your plan? How will you communicate this plan?
- It all worked!
- Developed new abilities to analyze data.
- We lost several days due to weather so our action plan did not have the success we had hoped for (by this date).
- It would have been nice to have a little bit more school time between meetings to implement our plans.

3. How would you rate this workshop overall?

1	2	3	4	5
			13	7

4. How would you rate the facilitation for this workshop?

1	2	3	4	5
1			5	15

5. As you look back on your learning from all of the workshops, how, if at all, has your practice changed?

- The importance of focusing in action plans and the process of following through
It has become more focused and organized as well as improved our communication with staff and quality of our PD.
- I understand how to really focus and use the 5Es to implement change.
- Increased reflection/ leaning into discomfort
- More focused in action plan and steps to reach our outcomes
- I've been a more open listener to others and more aware of making solutions rather than griping.
- I used vote with your feet, dots, and fishbowls in my classroom.
- Yes, the communication of clear expectations to both the staff and my students has changed.

- My practice has changed because I have become a better listener.
- What people think can help shape my decision making. Especially my students!
- Communication with staff, clarification of multiple initiatives, and being able to show cohesive thought and growth.
- It has made me more aware of what is happening in my building therefore making me become more involved.
- I feel I reached out to other teachers more.
- We've become more effective in planning.
- I am more aware of how to read 5E and steps that need to be put in place.
- It has changed staff meetings to allow more teacher to teacher conversations/relationship building.
- Format of action plan may be used for other purposes to guide ILT action plan (i.e. not specific to 5Es)
- I'm more focus and sensitive on improving our goals.
- We at School B really benefited from the structure of the action plan.
- Able to bring the 5E's to the ILT and for the ILT to take some action based on data- Plan fod
- We mostly addressed teacher-teacher trust and it seemed to not impact my interactions with students I have become very aware of teacher interactions, thought a lot about what I'd like to give to and receive from my colleagues.
- I've really tried to be the change I want to see.

6. To what extent have these workshops led to an increase in your use of the following practices?

Norms -	<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Very Little</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>To a Great Extent</i>
		1	8	11
Protocols -	<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Very Little</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>To a Great Extent</i>
		1	9	10
Low-Inf. Obs. -	<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Very Little</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>To a Great Extent</i>
4 blank		1	11	4
Purposeful Reflect.	<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Very Little</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>To a Great Extent</i>
			3	17
Celebration -	<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Very Little</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>To a Great Extent</i>
		2	8	10
Embracing Discomfort	<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Very Little</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>To a Great Extent</i>
			7	13

- I'm very interested in parents filling out the survey
- I would be interested in doing additional work on the 5Essentials (Maria Kareotes)
- I still would like to be more facile with the 5E data, how to communicate it, and how to use it to better realize root causes.
- Thanks!
- You made us all work hard and challenged us.
- The information that was given has lead to a clearer understanding of data interpretation.
- I believe that teachers in the district should receive a “brief workshop” on how to accurately interpret the 5E survey.
- There were many questions/concerns from the staff on the interpretation of the questions.
- Thank you for the support during staff meetings and the community meetings to inform and deflect emotions and help everyone involved embrace the work ahead.
- Thank you.
- Thank you!!!!
- I would ask you to continue to invite coherence between this work and other projects, initiatives.
- A very worthwhile experience!!

