

S3 IMPLEMENTATION BRIEF

The success of your S3 project is dependent on how well you systematically implement throughout the school your Workplan activities for school climate improvement. In this Brief, we outline principles of evidence-based implementation practice that will help ensure the success of your efforts. We review the six typical stages of program implementation, some of the pitfalls you may encounter on the way, and strategies that will help you get going and avoid these pitfalls.¹

STAGES OF IMPLEMENTATION

Successful implementation of your S3 Workplan begins with a thorough working knowledge of the expected stages for implementation: Development, Installation, Initial Implementation, Full Operation, Innovation, and Sustainability. Understanding how implementation typically progresses will help you predict and avoid potential roadblocks and pitfalls.

STAGE 1: DEVELOPMENT. Your S3 team has already completed much of the Development (Stage 1) work during the early part of the 2011 academic year. However, it is possible that, as you respond to new circumstances and data in the 2012/13 and 2013/14 years, you may need to revisit your Workplan². Following are the types of activities that are involved in Development planning:

- a. Identify the need for intervention(s) by considering school climate information made available to you, including your School Climate Report Card and Cal-SCHLS data.
- b. Acquire additional information by talking with stakeholder groups. For example, consider the information collected through the Student Listening Circle (a.k.a. “Fishbowl”).
- c. Consider the fit between strategies outlined in the *What Works Briefs* and your school.
- d. Prepare the school community by sharing information about your site’s S3 Workplans. Share this information regularly and to as many groups as possible (e.g., parent groups, school site council, school improvement teams, community agency meetings, etc.)

STAGE 2: INSTALLATION. Your S3 team is likely to have begun Workplan Installation (Stage 2) work during the latter part of the 2011–2012 academic year. This work is certain to continue through the life of

¹ The success of your S3 efforts will NOT be evaluated based on the quality of your implementation practices. However, the evidence-based programs and practices that you have selected for your grant are less likely to be successful if you do not attend to the implementation process.

² Work with your Technical Specialist and your California Department of Education S3 Regional Consultant to determine when and if revisions are necessary to your Workplan.

grant, as circumstances inevitably change. Following are the types of activities that are involved in the Installation stage:

- a. Explore additional funding streams for your ongoing school climate improvement strategies. This may happen when the S3 team or the student fishbowl identified activities that are important to school climate improvement but cannot be funded directly by S3, such as campus physical improvement or beautification projects. Other grants such as Gear Up and the Tobacco Use Prevention and Education grants may also provide additional funding to supplement prevention activities at school.
- b. Ensure that staffing is adequate for successful implementation. This may include hiring new staff, and/or realigning current staff, to ensure that each of the S3 strategies is implemented as designed.
- c. Ensure that each of the S3 strategies has been evaluated for space, technology, and other necessary materials.

STAGE 3: INITIAL IMPLEMENTATION. The Initial Implementation stage (Stage 3) is certain to be among the most challenging of the implementation stages, as you will be working against the prevailing school climate, including possible skepticism amongst staff, parents, and/or students.

- a. Core components of successful Initial Implementation efforts include: (a) selection of optimal staff to run each of the S3 Workplan strategies; (b) preservice and inservice training for each of your S3 strategies, particularly on selected evidence-based programs; (c) ongoing consultation and coaching for key project staff; and (d) effective staff and program evaluation.
- b. Initial Implementation is most likely to be successful when:
 - i. Communication between the S3 Implementation Group (see Strategies for Avoiding Pitfalls section) and the rest of the school is ongoing, regularly scheduled, and deliberate.
 - ii. The organization promotes a growth-orientation, reinforcing the value of learning new skills and practices and of improving existing ones.
 - iii. Dedicated S3 resources are advertised, available, and readily accessible.
 - iv. The S3 Workplan activities are viewed by staff, students, and parents as consistent with the school's mission.
 - v. You readily draw upon the technical assistance available through your S3 Technical Specialist, as well as through the technical assistance centers affiliated with each of the evidence-based programs selected.
 - vi. A system for monitoring implementation progress has been shared with the staff.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Training on the new skills expected of staff and students must be followed by regular coaching (daily is optimal) by a person who is highly regarded in the school, is dedicated to managing the S3 project, and has the authority to remove barriers to S3 implementation.

STAGE 4: FULL OPERATION. Full Operation Implementation (Stage 4) begins when the Workplan strategies have become fully functional, operating as intended. During this stage, school climate improvement strategies will become integrated into the prevailing school culture, affecting the behavior of individuals and groups. When your S3 project is in Full Operation Implementation, students selected for

special programs will be referred appropriately and efficiently following the criteria outlined by those personnel responsible for drafting the referral policies (e.g., Student Assistance Team). S3 strategies and programs will begin to run efficiently, as barriers to implementation have been resolved. It may be the case that you will not reach Full Operation until the final year of your grant (2013 – 2014).

STAGE 5: INNOVATION. Innovation (Stage 5) will involve refining and expanding your S3 activities and programs based on your school’s unique experiences over the course of the project. This will only occur after you have achieved success at the Full Operation stage. In many cases, this may mean that this stage will primarily occur after project funding has ended.

STAGE 6: SUSTAINABILITY. Once your S3 strategies and programs have become fully operational and self-sustaining, you will need to begin to consider ways to ensure that they will exist after S3 funding ends. It is expected that, while many schools will begin initial sustainability-related conversations, most S3 schools will not reach this point by the time their S3 funding ends.

SPRING 2012: PREPARING FOR STAGES 2 & 3

In Spring 2012, most S3 schools will be laying the groundwork for the installation and initial implementation of their Workplan activities and programs. Below are activities that will help ensure successful initial implementation:

1. Communicate with your staff and community by developing an understanding of the context for how your high school was selected for the S3 grant.
 - a. Explain what school climate efforts have been undergone in the past, including what has and what has not worked.
 - b. Explain how the S3 grant is going to be integrated into current school improvement efforts.
 - c. Explain how the school climate strategies were selected and why, including costs.
2. Gain spheres of influence.
 - a. Identify individuals for your S3 Implementation Group (for more information on the S3 Implementation Group, see Strategies for Avoiding Implementation Pitfalls section).
 - b. Plan and implement strategies to mobilize staff members’, students’, and parents’ support for the S3 grant activities. For example, start a social marketing campaign and share your Cal-SCHLS data!
 - c. Consider ways to communicate your efforts to school policymakers, such as members of the school board.
3. Clarify feasibility plan.
 - a. Explain how you have envisioned the S3 strategies being integrated into the existing infrastructure of the school.
 - b. Explain a long-range strategic plan for sustainability of the school climate improvements.

Pitfalls to S3 Implementation

1. Teachers and other school community members are in denial of the school climate problem at your school.
2. Teachers and other school community members aren't aware of the purpose of the S3 strategies selected by the school climate team.
3. Teachers and other school community members don't know what they can do to help support and propel the S3 strategies.
4. Teachers and other school community members are given no resources to help them implement S3 strategies.
5. Teachers and other school community members sense that the principal and/or other key members of the school leadership team do not support the S3 strategies.

STRATEGIES FOR AVOIDING S3 IMPLEMENTATION PITFALLS

1. First among all implementation strategies is to provide *strong management support*. This includes:
 - a. Consistent, clear, and positive communication to all stakeholder groups, including parents, staff, and students;
 - b. Timely follow-up to questions and action items;
 - c. Effective recruitment of school climate advocates to broaden sphere of influence; and
 - d. Ongoing reinforcement of student, staff, and parent actions that are consistent with school climate improvement goals
2. Establish an *S3 Implementation Group*.
 - a. Establishing a group of individuals who will support your Workplan Implementation efforts over the course of the 3-year grant. This group may include the individuals who have participated in your S3 Intervention Team during the initial stages of the grant (Fall 2011), in addition to other school climate improvement advocates. Of course, the S3 grant *requires* that the S3 Intervention team meet at least monthly to monitor the implementation progress, so it makes sense to fold implementation monitoring responsibilities into this group's agenda.
 - b. This group should meet regularly over the duration of the grant, and will be responsible for reviewing grant implementation efforts in order to ensure that lessons learned are incorporated into successive years' implementation plans. This group will ensure that annual implementation routines (e.g., preservice and coaching of new staff in Fall, inservice during winter, and Cal-SCHLS administration and evaluation in spring) are set and remain functional over time. This group is also essential for ensuring that "organizational memory" exists after the grant has ended (Spring 2014).
 - c. Some personal characteristics of S3 Implementation Group members will help improve the likelihood of success for the S3 grant implementation. They include:

- i. Optimism: Implementation Group members should be hopeful about the possibility for change in the school organization.
 - ii. Critical insight into the organization: Implementation Group members should have knowledge of the internal workings of the school organization and local community, including formal and informal procedures for coordinating professional development; foreseeable challenges in implementing new programs and activities with particular individuals or departments; known challenges and promising practices for facilitating parent involvement; and knowledge of the special needs and challenges involved in working with various student populations.
 - iii. Self-reflective: In the interest of organizational improvement, Implementation Group members should be interested in thinking about lessons learned. Each year, the Group members should be considering ways to build upon the school's implementation successes and to avoid running into the same implementation challenges in future years.
 - iv. Forward thinking and organized: Members will need to have the ability to think ahead to foresee roadblocks, keep high quality notes about their strategies, and maintain an ongoing pace for implementation meetings.
 - v. Good communicators: Members will need good communication skills in order to work together to solve problems effectively. Additionally, the Implementation Group members will need to be able to communicate their annual goals and lessons learned to the entire school community.
3. Focus on school community members' (staff/parents/students) commitment. You can improve their commitment by being active, vocal champions for your S3 initiative and the importance of school climate improvement, in general.
 4. Empower staff members by clearly explaining ways they can become involved. Share the *What Works Briefs* (available at californias3.wested.org) with them. The Quick Wins sections in these Briefs are designed to help individuals consider what they can do immediately to contribute to the S3 effort.
 5. Provide teachers with professional development opportunities linked to your S3 activities and programs. Clearly articulate how the in-service or other learning opportunity is linked to your school's Workplan.
 6. Make sure that teachers do not feel burdened by S3 activities and programs, but that they are instead perceived as practical and useful.

The implementation guidelines included in this *S3 Implementation Brief* were derived from the following works:

Adelman, H. & Taylor, L. (2003). On sustainability of project innovations as systemic change. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, 14, 1–25.

Fixsen, D., Naoom, S., Blase, K., Friedman, R., & Wallace, F. (2005). *Implementation research: A synthesis of the literature*. Tampa, FL: University of South Florida, Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute, The National Implementation Research Network (FMHI Publication #231).

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