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Odds-Beating Schools in the Common Core Era

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UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY
State University of New York

Welcome !

Introductions

Project Purpose

Study Design (who did we study and why?)

Findings:

- **Leadership**
 - Q&A
 - **Instruction**
 - Literacy/writing
 - Tech
 - Sped instruction
 - Q&A
 - **Theories of Action**
 - Q&A
- ## Large Group Q&A

Project Purpose

- The primary purpose for the proposed research is to identify the school practices and policies found in elementary and middle schools whose students exceeded performance expectations on the 2012-2013 New York State assessments (as well as those prior), which were the first aligned with Common Core Standards.

Research Design: Multiple Case Study

District-Level Interviews

- Superintendent Interview
- Asst. Super for Curriculum & Instruction Interview
- Director of Special Education
- Community Outreach Coordinator
- Director of Assessment
- Director of Professional Development
- Director of ESL/Bilingual Ed
- Director of Student Services

School-Level Interviews and Focus Groups

- Principal Interview
- Building Leadership Team Focus Group
- Mainstream Content Teacher Focus Group
- Support Staff Focus Group (School Psychologist, Social Worker, Nurse)
- ESL Teacher Interview (or Focus Group upon request)
- Special Education Interview (or Focus Group upon request)
- Instructional Coach/Master Teacher Interview
- Individual Mainstream Teacher Debrief Interview

Other Data Sources

- Interpretive Memo
- Classroom observation protocol ELA Part 1
- Classroom observation protocol Math Part 1
- Classroom observation Part 2
- Documents
- Surveys:
 - (1) Of all Staff
 - (2) Of teachers of math and English Language Arts

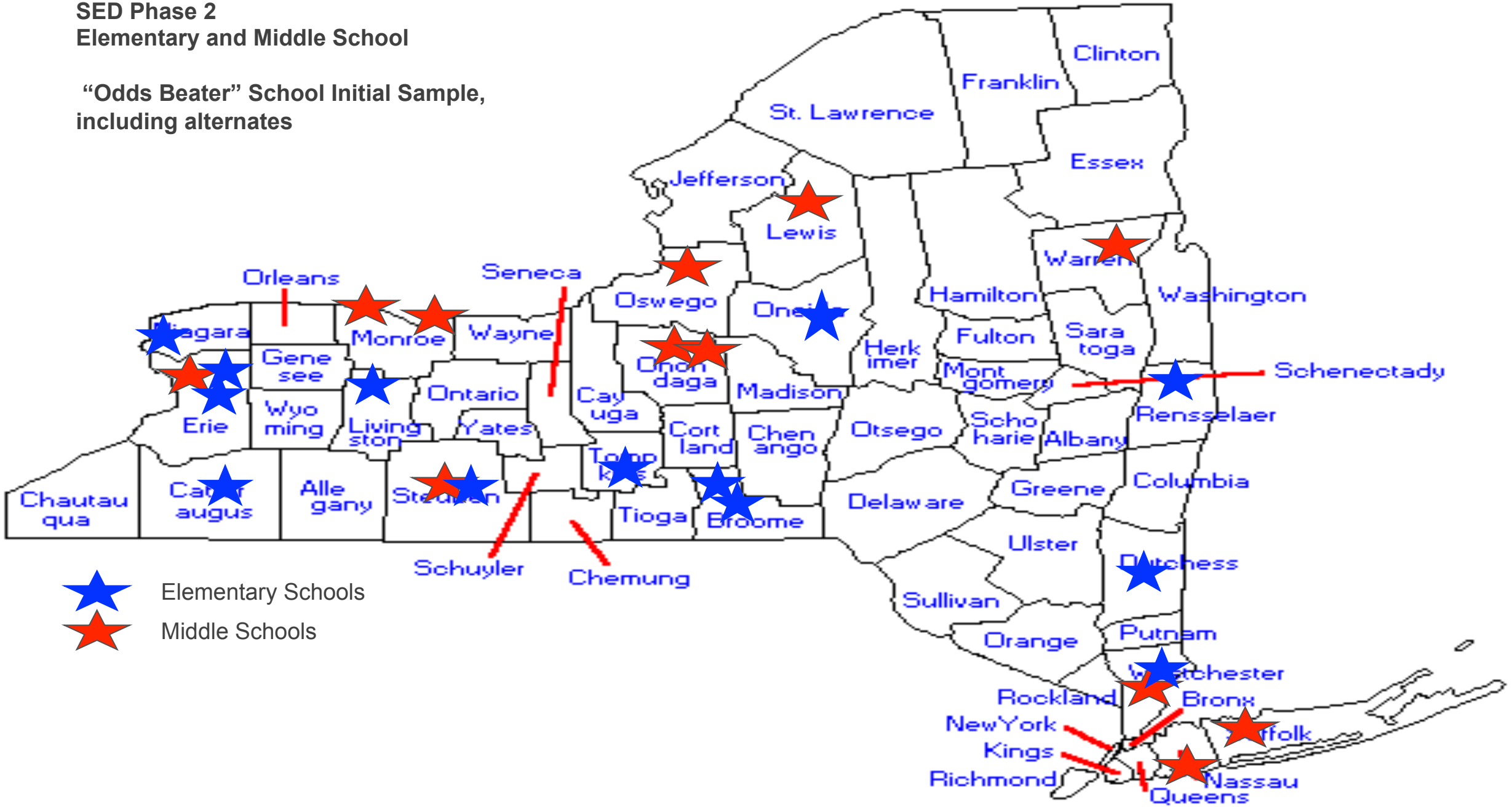
Schools in sample (n=18)

elementary	Average Z Residual Range
Spring Creek	1.50-1.99
Eagle Bluff	1.00-1.50
Bay City	1.50-1.99
Starling Springs	1.50-1.99
Yellow Valley	1.50-1.99
Goliad	1.00-1.59
Average	1.50-1.99
Wolf Creek	-0.20-0.00
Paige City	0.00-0.20
Sun Hollow	0.00-0.20
Average	-0.20-0.00

middle	Average Z Residual Range
Hutch Hill	< 1.00
Julesberg	1.00-1.50
Larabee	2.00<
Roaring Gap	1.50-1.99
Ruby	2.00<
Sage City	<1.00
Average	1.00-1.50
Locus Glen	-0.20-0.00
Silver City	0.00-0.20
Tarelton	0.00-0.20
Average	-0.20-0.00

SED Phase 2
Elementary and Middle School

“Odds Beater” School Initial Sample,
including alternates



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What is “Odds Beating”?

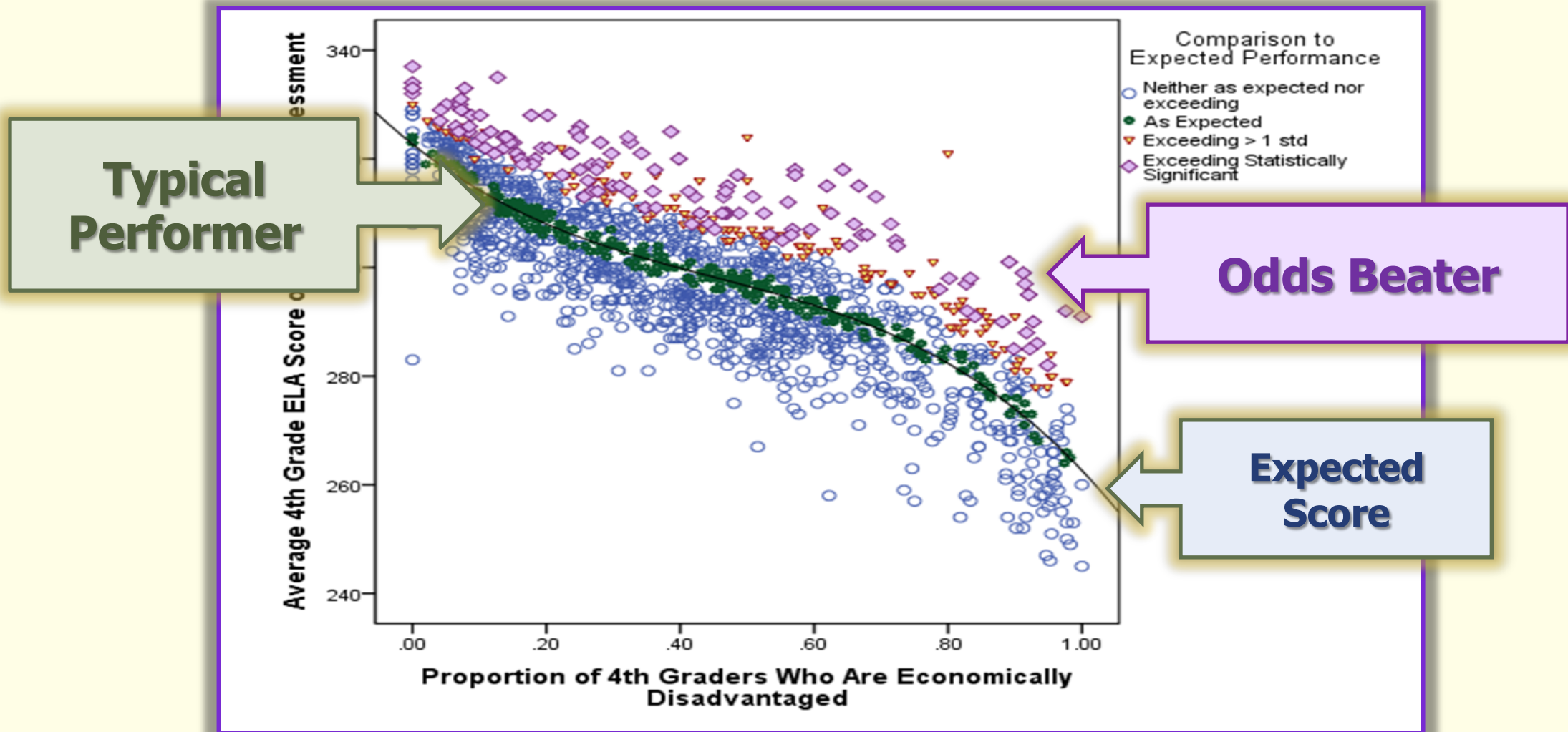
▣ Odds Beating

- Schools whose students performed significantly better on 2013 state Common Core-aligned assessments in multiple subjects and grade levels than other schools serving populations with similar rates of poverty and English Language Learners.

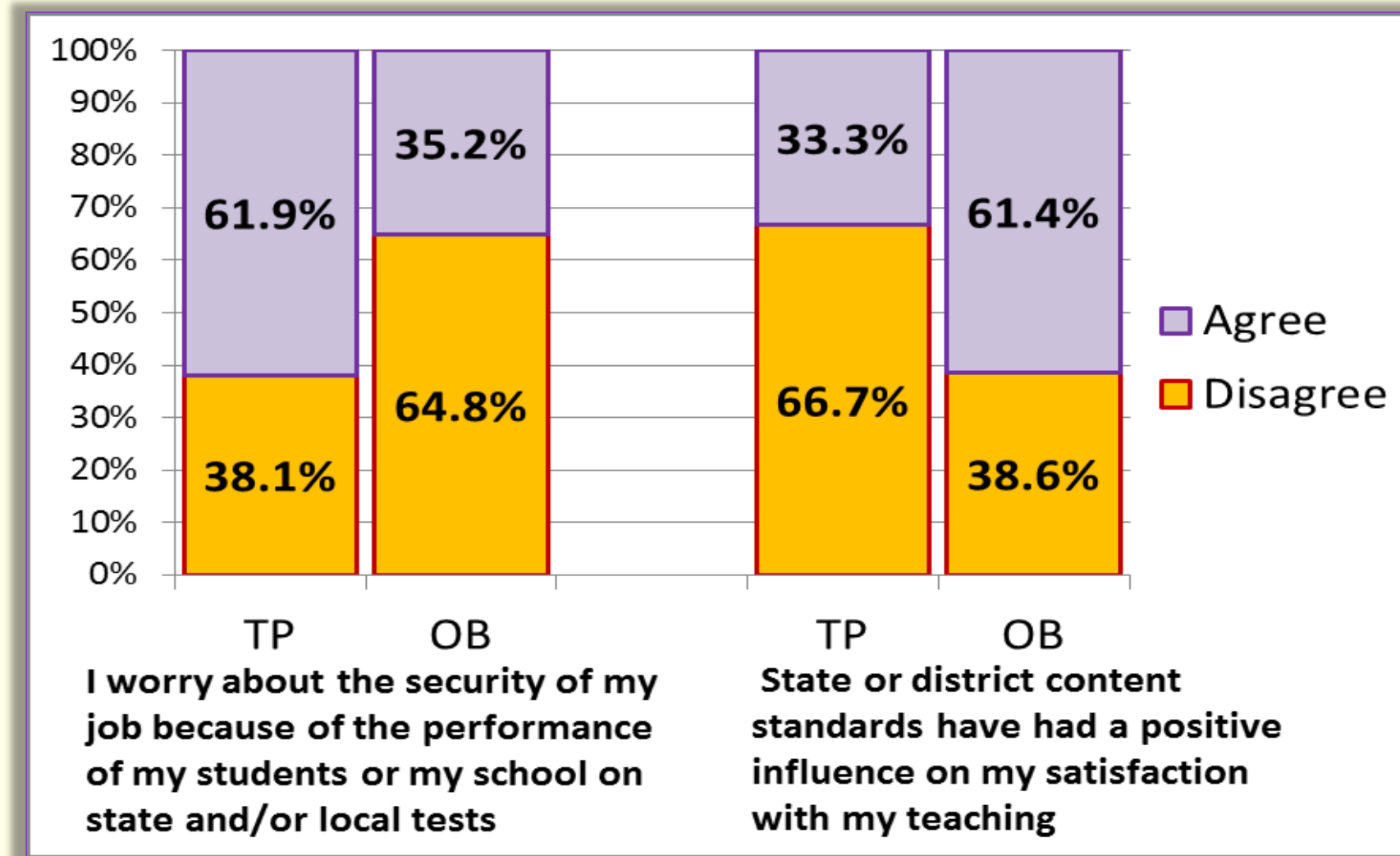
▣ Typically performing schools

- Schools whose students performed as expected on state assessments for the population served.

Rates of Economic Disadvantage & Average 4th Grade ELA Score



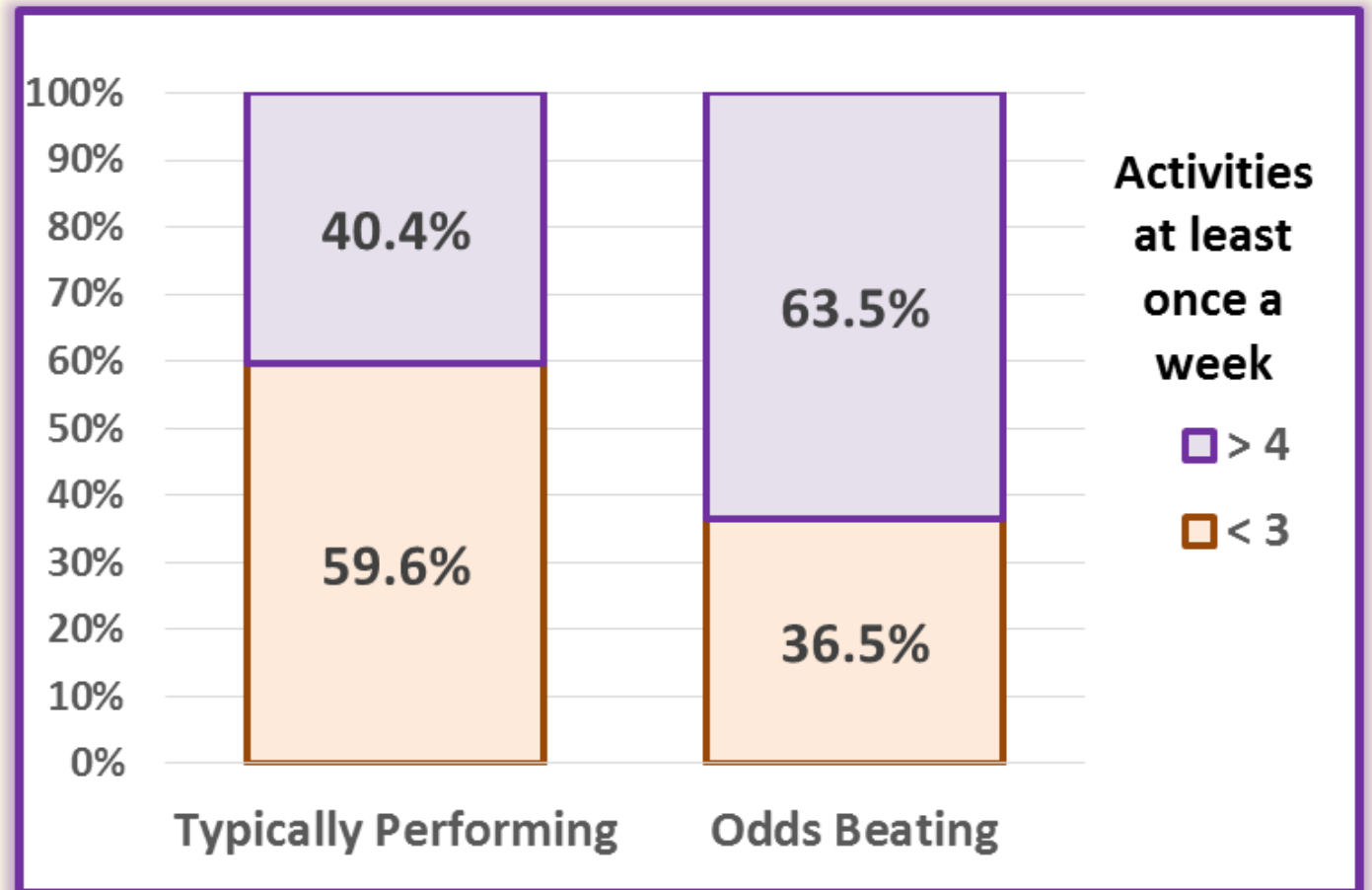
Elementary Teachers' Reform Initiatives Concerns



Professional Learning Communities in Elementary and Middle Schools

How often do you have the following types of interactions with other teachers in this school?

- Discuss how to teach a particular topic
- Collaborate in planning and preparing instructional materials
- Share what I have learned about my teaching experiences
- Analyze student data
- Work together to try out new ideas
- Participate in professional development
- Practice new skills



Food for Reflection

- ▣ What might school and district leaders be doing to ease teachers' concerns about APPR and CCLS?
- ▣ What might school and district leaders be doing to support professional learning communities?
- ▣ How might teachers practices in their classrooms be different?

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Large Group Q&A

**District Leaders
are Proactive
and Adaptive**

Build Capacity

Develop Competency

Responsive to Needs

Bridging Strategies



Buffering Strategies



Brokering Strategies

**IMPLEMENTATION
OF CCLS and APPR**

District Leaders Are Proactive

- Adoption of CCSS in their district prior to mandate
 - Anticipated innovations
 - Developed organizational capacity for implementation- Professional development and organizational restructuring

"We were doing those standards before they were called the Common Core... We just didn't know it was Common Core then. We made the shift long before many districts [in] the region and the state did because we already talked about doing that kind of work."

– Starling Springs Superintendent

Bridging, Buffering, Brokering

School/District	District Leadership
Yellow Valley- OB	B-B-B
Bay City- OB	B-B-B
Eagle Bluff- OB	B-B-B
Starling Springs- OB	B-B-B
Spring Creek-OB	B-B-B
Goliad- OB	B-B-B
Wolf Creek- Typical	Asst Supt -Bridge
Paige City- Typical	Asst Supt- Broker, inconsistent bridging
Sun Hollow- Typical	None evident

Bridging Strategies

- Building trust through communication
- Using district resources creatively
- Adapting, not adopting, Common Core State Standards

“We sit down with teacher groups, classroom teachers and with our instructional leaders who are the administrators within the buildings and we ask them what’s working, what isn’t, what are the issues? What are you seeing? And we try to filter that up and adjust where we can. ... we still share that vision learning for all whatever it takes for the most part. It’s just working through it that’s making it a big challenge.” -Bay City Superintendent

Buffering Strategies

- Protecting the Instructional Core
- Flexible CCSS implementation timetables

“So what I said to the teachers was, what do you need, how much time do you need, how do you want to go about this? In other words, do you want release time, work after school, do you want to focus it just on the summer because you've got kids and there's always this balance of how much time can people take out of their classroom and still feel like they're doing their work. I don't dictate how that's to be done, I said the CCLS are here, let's take a look at these and see where are we in terms of what we need to be doing and where are the gaps. So they started looking at that and made the adjustments in the curriculum.”

- Eagle Bluff District Leader

Brokering Strategies

- Partnerships with other organizations
- Using shared language to coordinate and align efforts

"I've just started working with the board on reviewing and reflecting on the district vision, mission, belief and goals... it's done in tandem with what I call our teacher leadership team, which is made up of all of the administrators and teacher leaders who represent all of our curriculum areas, Pre-K through 12. And then they work with their departments and in their buildings. So what that does is get it deep into the school and everybody gets to inform it as well as react and reflect on what the other groups are doing, so it really does become part of the conversation that's happening in the district."

- Eagle Bluff Superintendent

Rural School Context

	Grade Span	% Economic Disadvantage [2]	% White	PPE[1]	Rural Designation
Odds-Beating Schools					
Eagle Bluff [3]	K-6	40-50	90-100	\$15,000	Rural Remote
Spring Lake	K-6	40-50	90 -100	\$18,000	Rural Distant
Typical School					
Wolf Creek	K-6	30-35	90-100	\$18,000	Rural Fringe
Average for New York	NA	50	48	\$20,410	NA

[1] Per pupil expenditures are rounded

[2] Percentages and statistical results are provided in ranges to ensure anonymity

[3] All school and district names are pseudonyms

Research Question

- How do rural school and district leaders in schools with predicted and above-predicted student achievement address RttT policy demands?
 - Specifically, how do they integrate these “one-size fits” all standardizing policies with place-based initiatives?

Findings

- Leaders craft coherence by balancing internal and external demands in their vision, mission, and goals.
- Leaders support teachers in integrating RttT into existing practices, including district curriculum and place-based activities
- Leaders engage in buffering, bridging, and brokering strategies with faculty.

Crafting Coherence in District Vision, Mission, and Goals

Odds Beater

"The district aspires to be valued as a district of distinction by our community. When we talk about being a district of distinction, or to be valued by our community, we look at the types of things that our community does value and then ask how do we position our students and our programs to be able to exemplify that."

Superintendent, Eagle Bluff

Typical Performer

"I'm going to guess the honest answer to that is, I'm not sure what the vision is."

Assistant Principal, Wolf Creek

Integrate RttT into Existing Practices

Curriculum

"I said [to teachers], the Common Core State Standards are here, let's take a look at them and see where we are in terms of what we need to be doing and where are the gaps. So they started looking at that and made the adjustments to the curriculum."

Superintendent, Eagle Bluff

Teacher Evaluation

- "Even before APPR came out; we had formal classroom observations where a principal or a district administrator would come in and observe a teacher." Assistant Superintendent, Eagle Bluff
- "I did not want us to have a system that would pit one teacher against another or that would have teachers focusing more on their own individual score and then it would in effect, or have the potential, anyway, to destroy the collaborative system that we had. Because we all share in the responsibility in the success of these kids and I didn't want anything to interfere with that." Superintendent, Eagle Bluff

Buffering

Odds Beater

“So what I said to teachers was, ‘what do you need? How much time do you need? How do you want to go about this?’ In other words, ‘Do you want release time, work after school, or do you want to focus just on the summer because you have kids?’ I don’t dictate how that’s to be done.”

Superintendent, Eagle Bluff

Typical Performer

“We came on the first day of school and you sit in the auditorium with K through 12, and the big screen comes down with everybody’s scores. It was said, Well everybody should be made accountable. Everybody’s looking for their name. I had two fellow teachers in tears about it, because your name’s up there... It was demeaning.”

Teacher, Wolf Creek

Bridging

Integrate
Eagle Bluff

- Gap analysis with existing curriculum
- Teacher made materials
- Common Core Plus
- Modules available in PDF
- New Text series in Spring 2014

Adapt
Spring Lake

- Modules implemented as core curricular resource
- Teachers giving leeway to adapt modules to students needs

Adopt
Wolf Creek

- Modules implemented as core curricular resource
- Administrators reported teachers can adapt; teachers reported expectations of fidelity

Brokering

"[The superintendent] just kept saying over and over again, this is change, it's just change. It will be fine, we're going to get through this together."

Principal, Spring Lake

"I'm quite happy having people repeat an idea to me and think it's their idea -- that's ownership of the idea."

Superintendent, Spring Lake

"I mentor principals forever. So I have a monthly meeting with every principal. We go over their goals, we go over their progress. We go over their questions, their challenges. So that's an individual meeting. And I go to their meetings at least once a week. And then we also meet here as a team, once or twice a month."

- Superintendent, Eagle Bluff

Take-aways

- Place-based and standards based reform need not be mutually exclusive ^[1]
- When rural school leaders use adaptive and proactive approaches to help policy innovations happen, they appear more able to integrate changes into existing practices, including locally developed curriculum, place-based learning opportunities, and adaptation of the curriculum modules to meet local student needs.
- When rural school leaders take a top down, make it happen approach, these policy innovations are more disruptive and appear to limit local educational goals and efforts.

[1] Kannapel, 2000

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➤ **Theories of Action**

➤ Q&A

Large Group Q&A

Shared Teacher Literacy Instruction Practices in Odds-beating Elementary Schools

1. Used integrative approaches to literacy instruction— combining the old with the new.
2. Took a “student-centered” approach to CCSS implementation, making decisions based on the local context and the needs of their particular students.
3. Sustained, embedded, and focused PD structured around developing instructional skills and knowledge related to CCSS.

Odds-beating school administrator:

The teacher is not the sage on the stage anymore who talks all day long but creates lessons that are really very engaging, with students more active in the learning process.

I think that's the distinction for teachers is... there's a lot more turn and talk, working in triads, things where students might stand up and present their argument and another student might counter that.

There's a lot more shared inquiry, where students agree or disagree with their peers. It's a very different classroom, which is a good thing. I think teachers are doing what they can to get there. There has been a lot of PD to help them get there.

The potential promises of the CCSS for writing

Raised expectations for writing across disciplines, particularly argumentative and informative writing.

Findings:

Teachers were observed engaging students in a variety of writing tasks that included integrating academic vocabulary, comparing and contrasting texts, writing for different audiences (e.g. scientists, politicians), and research writing.

Teachers reported raising their expectations for writing – in amount, frequency, and quality.

The potential perils

- An overemphasis on foundational skills that take shape in drilling exercises on grammar, spelling, vocabulary, etc.
- Disregarding a developmental model to guide instruction (i.e. emphasis the use of a flexible array of strategies rather than a formulaic “use concrete details” approach)
- Teaching to the test by narrowing instruction to only those types of tasks required on the assessment and using state test rubrics to assess writing quality

Findings:

Use of templates for writing that mimicked fill-in-the-blank exercises.

Teachers’ voiced concern that their students are having more difficulty with creative writing since the focus of the Common Core is on non-fiction reading and writing and providing evidence to support an argument.

Use of writing samples scored at different levels on the state’s rubric to guide students’ writing (i.e. teaching to the test)

Implications

- (1) district and school investment in modeling and coaching teachers in CCSS-aligned instructional practices is necessary;
- (2) focused attention needs to be paid to building teachers' competencies in using differentiated and culturally-relevant instructional strategies; and
- (3) professional development re: writing instruction needs to target the use of EBPs, specifically the use of a variety of rubrics to assess writing; the use of prewriting, planning, and drafting with peers; and assignment of a variety of engaging extended writing tasks – preferably developed in collaboration with sped and ENL teachers to provide appropriate scaffolding.

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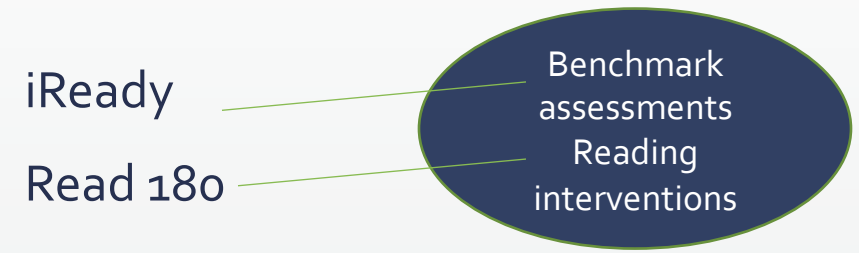
➤ Q&A

➤ Theories of Action

➤ Q&A

Large Group Q&A

What technologies are being used, and how?



How are Odds-Beating schools using technology?

- In Odds Beating schools, technology use is:
 - Integrated into the curriculum in **intentional** ways,
 - Used to support **differentiated instruction**, and
 - Supported with **professional development systems**
- In Typically Performing schools, technology use is:
 - Not always intentional
 - Mostly “one size fits all”
 - Inconsistently supported

Intentional Technology Integration

- *What all schools were doing:*

School management programs

Email & social media for communication

Data management

Benchmark testing

Smart Boards

Power point presentations

- *In Odds-Beating Schools, technology was integrated into the curriculum in innovative and intentional ways.*

Used to:

Support the writing process

Create “flipped” classrooms

Increase student engagement

Allow for better feedback

Intentional Technology Integration

Odds Beating Schools:

"In the middle school we have iPads. The instructional technology is phenomenal. 1 to 1 iPads for every student. Teachers have been trained in all functions of the iPad and Google Docs so students can collaborate and work together. We partnered with E-spark- a software platform that aligns to the MAP assessment. It provides a list of apps that are loaded onto each student's iPad, based on students' need. Students practice the skills they are weakest on using these E-spark skills."

-Julesberg District Leader

"Every room has a smartboard so it definitely adds to the engagement...We use Google Docs with our kids. That, the engagement of them writing an essay. They love it. They'd rather sit there and type an essay and get our live feedback. You know, that's exciting for them so we all really put a lot of effort into our plans to make sure we're utilizing the technology."

-Sage City teacher

Typical Schools:

"So we really try to infuse technology in the classroom. All of the eighth graders have iPads; half the seventh and half of sixth. Our goal is by the end of next year all students across the district will have them. So I support the technology use within the classroom, with science, really those interdisciplinary connections between math and science. There are so many skills that cross between the two subjects and the students see them."

- Silver City Math Coach

Technology Integration for Differentiation

Supporting AIS and Special Education

- iPads are loaded with apps specific to what students need
- Software programs to support differentiation are used as a regular part of the instructional program.

"[we will be] meeting with the teachers to determine for special education what apps are appropriate and what are we going to [help] the children best utilize. It's like this worker bee attitude here that we all work together but always focused on what could we do in staff development to make the children more successful." Assistant superintendent, Laribee (OB)

Supporting English Learners

- iPads, iPods, and Chromebooks are used to help ELLs translate, pronounce words correctly, and read in native languages and in English.
- Specific apps, such as iAnnotate, support literacy skills development

"I think, we're a very progressive school with the Chromebooks this year and the push for technology. I think that's great and I think the kids love that. And my kids in particular really benefit from having those resources right at their fingertips for translating things and what not. All of that is very much encouraged. ... And using the Chromebooks, I can monitor really closely with those activities because they just share it with Google Docs and I can monitor as they are going through." Roaring Gap ESL Teacher

"So we're constantly trying to use all of our resources you know well like not to just add one layer cake on top of another but use things strategically to help, to really bridge gaps." Department chairperson, Sage City

Using technology to differentiate in OB schools

Sage City **dual language math teacher** explains how she supports students by flipping the classroom:

- “Because of time I’m just doing it in Spanish, I don’t have time for both [Spanish and English]and not all but most of my lessons are online and so what the students are supposed to do, their homework is that individualized lesson. **They’re going to hear me solving a problem and they can rewind, they can pause, they can communicate with me through email and through my website actually.** The whole idea is that they watch a video at home, if they can, some of them don’t have computer or internet and then we come to a classroom and we practice on whatever skill they’re supposed to practice. So what happens with the students who don’t have a device at home but they don’t have an internet connection, most of them come before school, or after school to watch a video with me in the computer lab. Sometimes there’s always one or 2 students that didn’t come in the morning, the day before or they didn’t watch it at home, so I have the iPads in the classroom for them to use to watch the video while I get everybody else started with practice.”

Julesberg **special education teacher**, talking about technology supports that she uses with AIS, ENL, and Special Education students:

“They have the eSPARK program. I have my AIS math students go on EXTRAMath, which is the basic math skills. They are able to look stuff up. They have a dictionary and applications, and the applications also help them if they’re not comfortable with something on the computer, put in their own language or in English, if they need to, or they have the opportunity to - look up words that if they don’t understand them and try to you know get that comprehension and that’s something that’s currently available, going into a dictionary is much harder for them.... And they have -they’re able to be more independent with their own instruction and helping themselves to become better readers and learners.”

Supporting Technology Integration with Professional Development

Technology Integration is supported by professional development systems that are:

- Embedded
- Sustained
- Turn-key
- On demand

“If, instructional technology is going to be an integral teaching, learning, learning and teaching tool, you have to have three things. You have to have on demand access to the technology, you have to have on demand professional development support and you have to on demand technical support. That means every kid and teacher needs to have seamless access to the computing devices and internet access. As soon as they have to share computers or move mobile labs around, it doesn't happen because I don't have time to structure. It has to be available on the moment that I need it. So that's what we're committed to over the next five years, putting those devices in place. ”

Roaring Gap, superintendent

Supporting Technology Integration with Professional Development

- Roaring Gap MS: All newly hired library media specialists are technology experts and provide sustained and embedded PD for the school, along with teachers on special assignment to lead school-wide tech support.
- Hutch Hill MS: The technology committee consists of teacher leaders, who provide professional development training on technology topics that are requested by teachers, and other tech savvy supporting teachers who troubleshoot technology problems and answer questions. Distributing this work allows for the district director of technology to concentrate on improving the technology infrastructure throughout in each school.
- Sage City MS Teacher, speaking about the on-demand training/ assistance available to teachers and students:

Just the other day I had one of my kids couldn't log onto the computer so I quickly email [the technology coordinator] like, "oh I need..." – so she popped in and she's like wait a second you're doing it this way? Oh no I have to show you this one. My entire class signed on and we created a Google classroom and so now I've taken what she's shown me and I've done it in my other class so knowing like, I don't I'm not a technology person but she'll introduce me to new technologies and I'll be able to implement them in class. So I mean just having that and the availability of it is amazing. Having someone to be able to pop in and just show you hey let's do it this way, it's phenomenal.

Implications

- Connect technology integration and new technology initiatives to specific instructional, school, and/ or district goals.
- Identify teachers who are technologically savvy, and those who are using technology in innovative ways, to troubleshoot, train, and be responsible for some aspects of technology integration.
- Provide specialists (ENL teachers, AIS teachers, Special Education teachers, etc.) with training specific to technology integration for differentiating instruction.

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Universal Design of Instruction

(McGuire, Scott & Shaw, 2006)

- Equitable Use
- Flexibility in Use
- Simple and Intuitive
- Perceptible Information
- Tolerance of Error
- Low Physical Effort
- Size and space for approach
- Community of Learners
- Instructional Climate

Instructional Climate

Climate designed to be inclusive and set high expectations for all

"We want every student to be successful in the classroom-in any classroom that they are in and in any program that they are involved in"

-Eagle Hill MS

Success is really when we are able to deliver an education that results in high levels of achievement for all students"

-Sage City MS

Equitable Use

Practices designed to be useful and equivalent for all students with a diversity of needs.

"Lower functioning kids are being asked to achieve at the same level as general education kids, which had never happened about 3 or 4 years ago...we've gone completely inclusive."

- Julesberg MS

"We have students from various backgrounds and different socio-economic status. I think teachers in this district have really developed a fine craft in being able to develop instruction for all of the different types of learners."

- Roaring Gap MS

Flexibility in Use

Practices designed to meet the needs of a diverse population with a wide range of abilities

"We don't follow step by step the Common Core, but we definitely refer to it and look at it and we have made some adjustments"

- Sage City MS

"[Common Core] make it interesting, make it fun, make it relatable. Not to make it out of a workbook and out of a textbook, but to bring in real life and to make it interesting."

- Hutch Hill MS

Community of Learners

Practices designed to encourage high levels of T-S, S-S interactions in and out of the classroom

"[Collaborative groups] that's especially helpful for our special education students because it's often that the teacher always has to pull them [special education students] aside to give them something. Within their learning partnership, they become comfortable in working with the same person and they feel comfortable sharing."

- Roaring Gap MS

-

"So really getting to know our students and identifying any barriers or obstacles that may be impeding their success and collaboratively partnering with parents...with stakeholders...parents, providers, student-himself or herself-, as well as the team of teachers to align some goals to meet the student's needs."

- Hutch Hill MS

Take- aways

- Common Core Learning Standards act as a guide in schools with better performance outcomes. The standards guide content and curriculum but not instructional practices or learning activities.
- Designing educational spaces (e.g. physical environment, instructional strategies) to meet the diversity of student populations benefits all students

Theory of Action

Figure 1. Antecedents & Co-Requisites

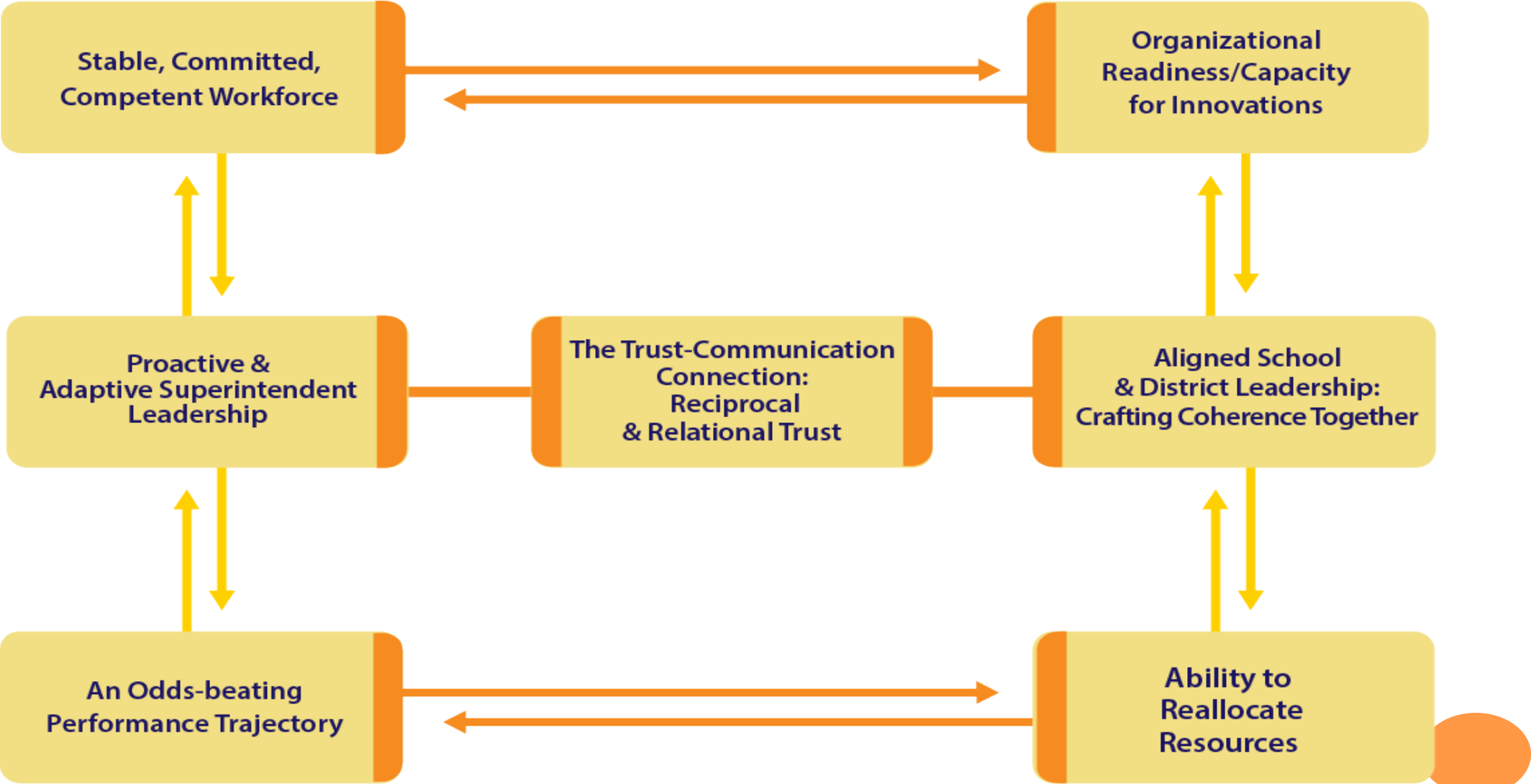


Figure 2. Learning-Focused Implementation Leadership

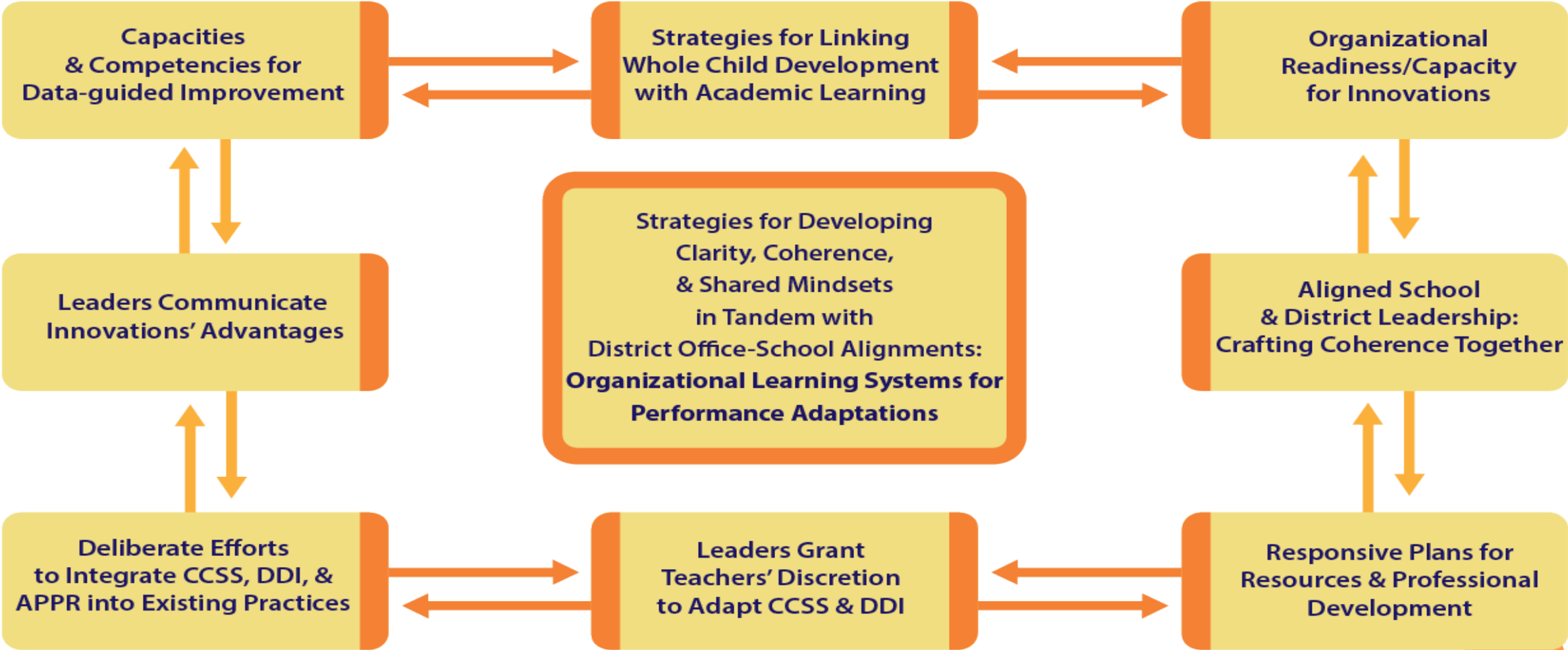


Figure 3. Drilling Deeper in Odds-Beating Schools

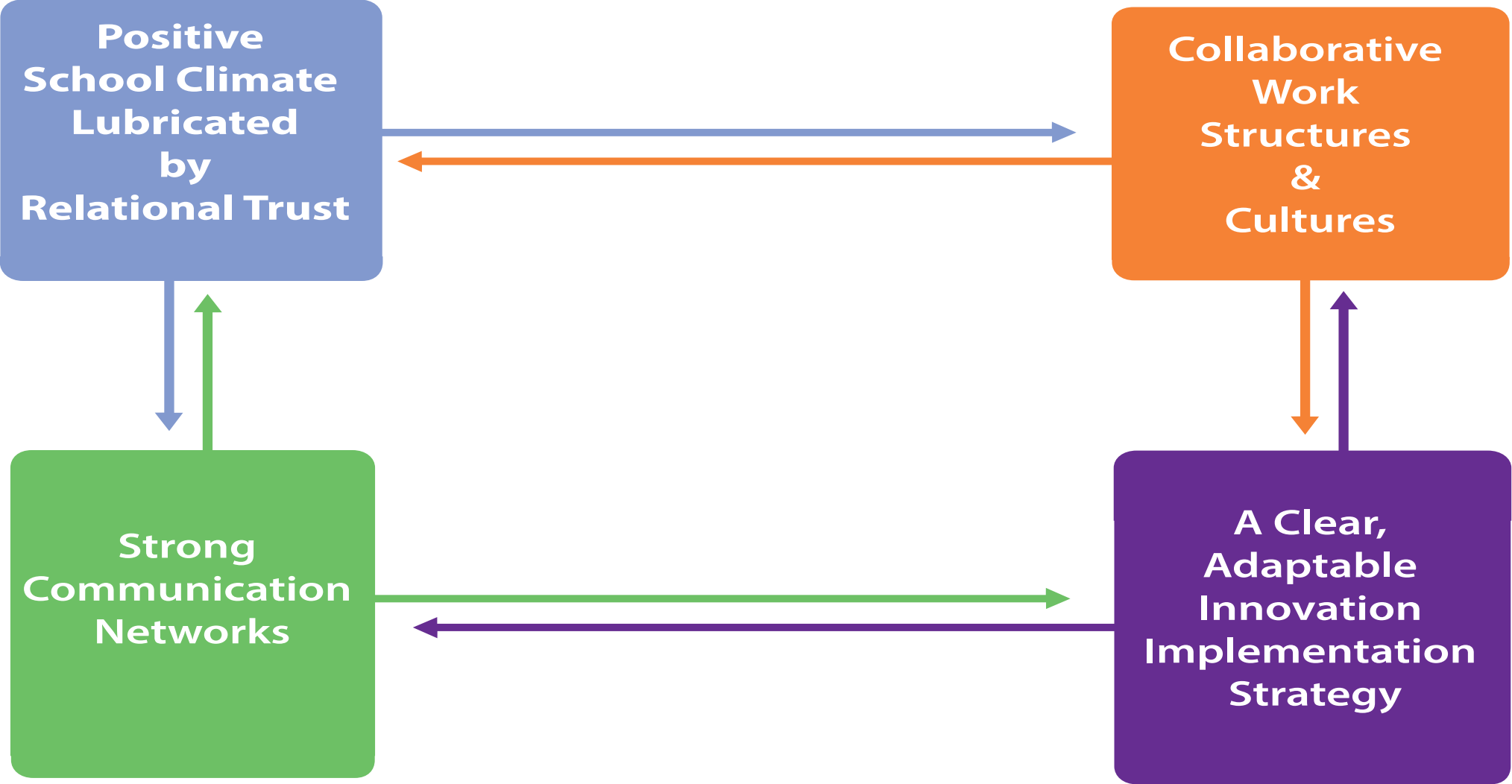
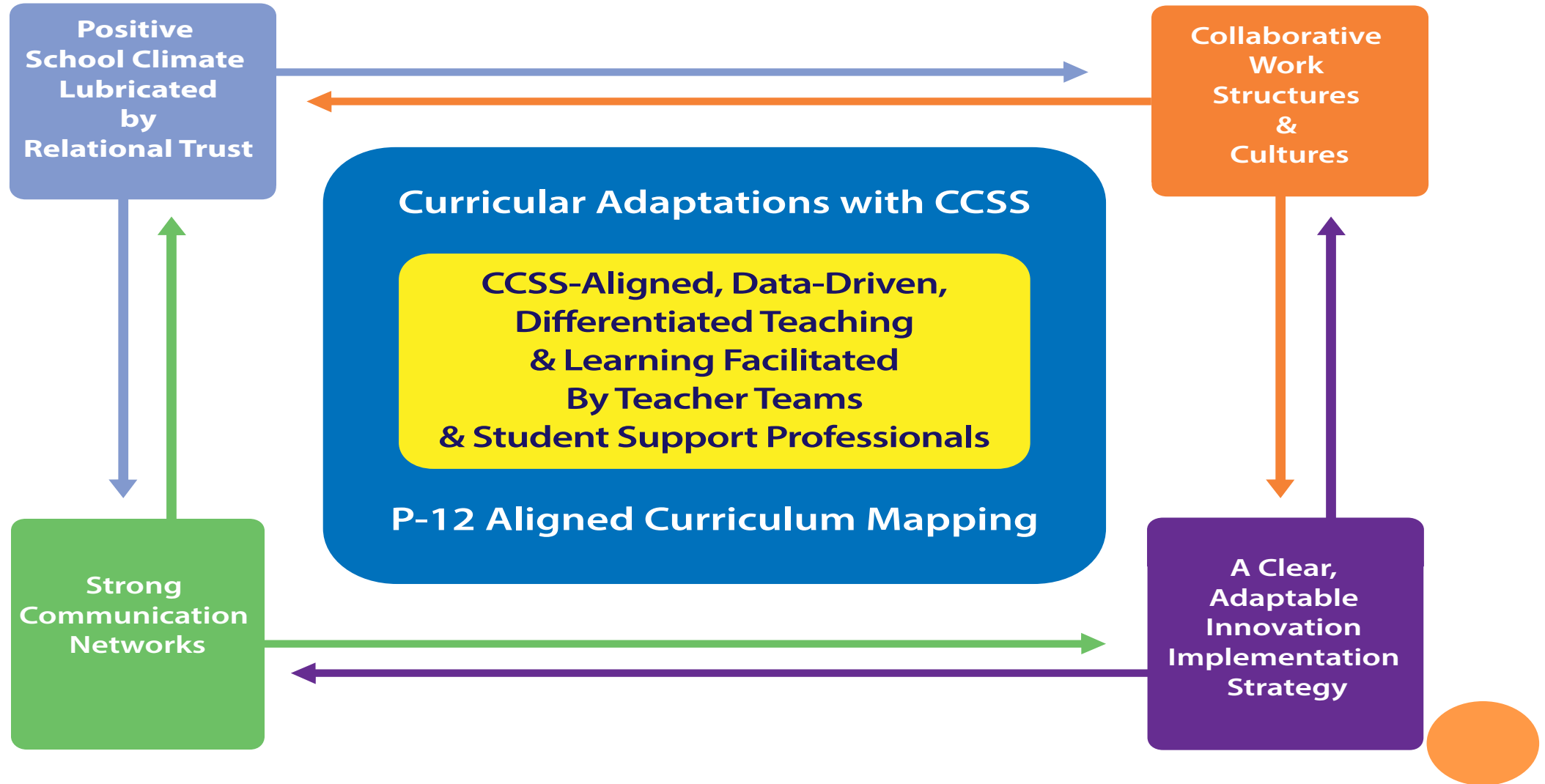


Figure 4. Improving the Core Technology



Odds-Beating Schools in the Common Core Era:

Other reports available at:

http://www.albany.edu/nykids/publications_and_presentations.php

Publications:

<http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11145-015-9588-6>



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