Innovation Processes and Preparing for Change in Early Education

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Introduction

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• Deputy Secretary, Wisconsin Department of Children and Families
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Our Mission

To bring a relentless focus on positive child and family outcomes to close the achievement gap and build a better future for children, families and communities served by the Head Start program

About Us

Acelero Learning is made up of three units, dedicated to closing the achievement gap

Acelero Learning

Directly-operated, federally-funded Head Start programs in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Nevada and Wisconsin

- Started in 2005
- Serves ~5,000 children
- $70M directly managed HS, Pre-K, and CC subsidy funds

Proving ground for innovation and impact

Program management support for newly launched Head Start programs

- Started in 2014
- Serves ~4,000 children
- $41M in partner annual HS grants

Dedicated to creating enhanced direct service model for new or expanding Head Start grantees

shine implement

Provides hands-on training, technical assistance, access to proprietary tools to existing Head Start programs

- Started in 2012
- Serves ~25,000 children
- $189M in partner annual HS grants

Dedicated to help others implement different aspects of Acelero model

shine assist

shine early learning
Track Record of Outcomes

- Gains after two years of Acelero Learning Head Start program are nearly 3x those of Head Start average on the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test ("PPVT").
- These are among largest known gains for a Head Start program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Head Start Average</th>
<th>Acelero Learning</th>
<th>High/Scope Perry Preschool</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PPVT Gains (%)</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: NIEER

Recognition

The Early Childhood Innovation Prize

[Image of award and event details]
Our agenda

• Why are we here?
• Building discipline around innovation
• Questions
Head Start laboratory for innovation

“The notion of Head Start as a national laboratory also fit my philosophy. I have always thought of Head Start not as a static program, but as an evolving concept. Head Start should be a model of the very best and most innovative in child and family services.”

– Dr. Edward Zigler, Head Start founder

Do we need to innovate?

“The studies confirm the overall lack of empirical support for the effectiveness of the two most widely-used pre-k programs, High Scope and Creative Curriculum, based on rigorous standards.”

- Brookings Institute study, 2017

“Free play or flash cards? New study nods to more rigorous preschool.”

Headline in the New York Times in May 2017

“After 50 years, Head Start struggles with uneven quality.”

- Headline from National Public Radio in December 2016
Nonetheless, the present findings clearly indicate that there is substantial cross-site variation in ITT effects of Head Start on important child outcomes. In addition, these findings strongly suggest that for at least the three outcome measures with near-zero grand mean effect size estimates (oral comprehension, externalizing, and self-regulation), Head Start centers range from substantially more effective to substantially less effective than their local alternatives. 

(Weiland, Michigan, 2015)

Our agenda

• Why are we here?
• Building discipline around innovation
• Questions
First of all...
How do we define innovation?

“Innovation is change that creates a new dimension of performance.”
-Peter Drucker

What used to happen at Acelero Learning?

We made lots of missteps...

– No beta testing
– Inconsistent knowledge capture
– Confirmation bias
– Staff felt swung from one side of the boat to the other
– Did not understand our own variation
Ask yourself...

• Have you ever tried to roll out a new idea, a new practice, a new methodology – and it did not go as well as you had hoped?
• What happened?
• What did you learn from it?

What did we do about it?
Acelero Learning’s Innovation Process 1.0

- Launch multiple pilots for each strategic priority
- Measure effectiveness and identify implementation barriers through a consistent process
- Repeat successful pencil pilots, not all pencil pilots
- Solidify implementation processes and tweak to increase effectiveness
- Choose one Innovation for broad roll-out across all four delegates

We instituted this *Pencil* pilot process

- Pilot opportunity identified that aligns with Strategic Priorities
- Pilot Application Developed
- Metrics Evaluated
- Application Approved
- Pilot Launched

Initiated by local program or Support Center

Jointly between local program and Support Center

By Monitoring, Systems, and Analysis Team

By local Executive Director, Chief Program Officer
And hoped that the majority of Innovations would be driven by those closest to the children and families we serve.

First Formal Evaluation Published July 2017

2016-2017 INNOVATIONS EVALUATION

Final Report
July 2017

COACHING: INCREASE FREQUENCY OF COACHING

Average Monthly Coaching Sessions Per Advocate

- Family Advocates in Group site contexts received 25% more coaching sessions,
  and Health & Disability advocates received 5% more coaching sessions than
  other advocates in their categories.
What did we learn?

1. We need a way to test even more rapid cycle innovations
2. The “funnel” needs to function as designed
   - CPO wanted to cancel some pilots and narrow the funnel, but had a hard time balancing that with emotional reaction in the network
3. Pilot Ownership
   - Only 49% of teachers and advocates feel that “New ideas and ways of doing business are encouraged”
   - Only 7/19 pilots were initiated at the local level
   - None of the applications came from line staff
4. Pilot volume too high with uneven representation
   - 19 chalk/pencil/pen pilots is too many for the network and MSA to handle
   - It is unclear if we are piloting the right number of options for each priority
4. Timing of Pilot process is challenging

Innovation Process 2.0

1. We added a Chalk phase for rapid cycle innovation
2. We stepped up our communication
3. We created an Innovation Review Board to:
   - Systematize participation of line staff
   - Manage the funnel
Innovation Essentials 2.0

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of dissemination</th>
<th>Incorporation of staff input demonstrated via...</th>
<th>Application approval</th>
<th>Launch or expansion period</th>
<th>Sponsor updates submitted</th>
<th>Evaluation mechanism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chalk</td>
<td>Informal; collaborative planning &amp; execution</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Sponsor-owned</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Sponsor-owned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pencil</td>
<td>Launch application</td>
<td>by IRB, in Jan/April/July</td>
<td>November-March</td>
<td>January-April</td>
<td>Evaluation family metrics + sponsor-presented data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pen</td>
<td>Expansion application</td>
<td>by IRB, in July</td>
<td>November-March</td>
<td>January-April</td>
<td>Evaluation family metrics + sponsor-presented data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharpie</td>
<td>Network-wide expansion application</td>
<td>by IRB, in July</td>
<td>Start of program year</td>
<td>January-April</td>
<td>Incorporated into overall Program Evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willow</td>
<td>Informal; collaborative planning &amp; execution</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Varies; usually start of program year</td>
<td>January-April</td>
<td>Individualized</td>
</tr>
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Pilot Process

New pilots first launch in the chalk (optional) or pencil phase.
Pilots that demonstrate success expand into the pen and sharpie phases.
Who makes the decisions?

The Innovation Review Board meets three times a year to review and approve all pilot applications.

Key Stats

- 7 members
- 4 delegate members - teacher, family advocate, center director and coordinator
- 3 senior members of the grantee
- Managed by the Vice President of Monitoring, Systems and Analysis

Network wide benefits

- Balance of power shifts towards line staff - four delegate members vs. three from grantee - majority rules
- More accountability to a process vs. approving a colleagues application
- Pilots are ultimately strengthened by "on the ground" review process

Local benefits

- Each of the delegate members can act as an ambassador to other delegate staff
- Increased knowledge of the process and excitement to participate in it
- Increased awareness of the process and better understanding of why decisions are made

What are the IRB’s deciding factors?

Pencil

- Theory of change
- Impact of change
- Engagement of delegate sponsor
- Evidence that teachers and advocates were involved at the application phase

Pen

- Best evidence of impact on intended metric (report created by VP of MSA)
- Ability to engage multiple delegate sponsors
- Evidence that teachers and advocates were involved in evolution of the pilot

Sharpie

- Success in multiple delegates with different conditions
- Evidence of impact on intended metric (report created by VP of MSA)
- Substantial proof that the change will also ultimately impact child outcomes
- Overwhelmingly positive feedback from teachers and advocates involved at the Pen phase (Early Adopters for Change Management)
How do we gauge success?

- Impact
- Scalability
- Employee Opinion
- Retention

Sample of 2017-2018 Pencils

**Adverse Childhood Experiences Survey (ACES):** use scores on an external tool to better identify and support families who have been exposed to high-levels of trauma

**Advocate Success Rubric 2.0:** use a simpler, shorter, and more streamlined Advocate Success Rubric and process

**Coaching Menu:** offer center directors varying types of coaching options for supporting teachers

**LENA:** deploy wearable technology that measures language exposure in classrooms and use the resulting data to inform coaching

**HITEC:** leverage an online video-coaching platform
Sample of 2017-2018 Pens

**Center Manager:** add a center-level leader to support operations

**Group Coaching:** replace individual advocate coaching with peer-to-peer feedback in small groups

**iStartSmart:** deploy child-facing games to gather assessment data electronically

**Live Coaching:** use bug-in-ear technology to allow center directors to coach teachers in real time

**myIGDIS:** adopt a streamlined and simplified tool and process for ongoing assessment of children by teachers

**Small c Coaching:** reduce full coaching cycles to bimonthly, and supplement with informal coaching activities

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**Ask yourself...**

- Are you testing any innovations in the 2018-2019 year? (It is okay if the answer is no!)
- As you think about the process you have undergone to prepare, what do you think your biggest challenge will be?
What could go wrong?
Change must be managed.

Solicit authentic participation

• Create opportunities for staff to contribute to the work – with their ideas and insights
• Create space for staff to share feedback
• Ensure feedback is taken into account in refinements and process
Communicate effectively

After the training, we sent the team an email with a plan for rolling out the change. We even highlighted the rollout date for the change.

Why is everyone so surprised that this is happening?!

- Repeat important messages 5-7 times
- Individualize and target content
- Send messages from the appropriate influencer
- Vary communication methods

Anticipate resistance

Unaware of why the change is needed

Impact on understanding of current role

Previous experiences with poorly managed changes

Lack of visible support and commitment from managers and senior leaders
“My program is stuck in its ways, and we are not getting better.”

How do we become more innovative?

The Innovator’s DNA

“We were intrigued to learn that at most companies, top executives do not feel personally responsible for coming up with strategic innovations. Rather, they feel responsible for facilitating the innovation process. In stark contrast, senior executives of the most innovative companies—a mere 15% in our study—don’t delegate creative work. They do it themselves.

But how do they do it? Our research led us to identify five “discovery skills” that distinguish the most creative executives: associating, questioning, observing, experimenting, and networking. We found that innovative entrepreneurs (who are also CEOs) spend 50% more time on these discovery activities than do CEOs with no track record for innovation. Together, these skills make up what we call the innovator’s DNA. And the good news is, if you’re not born with it, you can cultivate it.”

-Jeffrey H. Dyer, Hal Gregersen, and Clayton M. Christensen
Discovery Skills

1. **Associating**
   - the ability to successfully connect seemingly unrelated questions, problems, or ideas from different fields

2. **Questioning**
   - constantly ask questions that challenge common wisdom

3. **Observing**
   - scrutinize common phenomena

4. **Experimenting**
   - actively try out new ideas by creating prototypes and launching pilots

5. **Networking**
   - meet people with different kinds of ideas and perspectives to extend their own knowledge domains

Ask yourself...

- Which of these skills you do best? How do you do it?
- Which would you like to work on?
Conclusions

- Innovation is required if we hope to achieve our collective mission
- You do not have to invent a new wheel
- Develop a disciplined process
- Solicit authentic input, communicate effectively, and manage resistance
- Cultivate the innovator’s DNA

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