Implementation Fidelity & Preliminary Impact in Ohio Network of Education Transformation (ONET) Schools

**IMPORTANCE**
The Ohio Department of Education (ODE) dedicated Race to the Top (RttT) funds to the Educational Service Center of Central Ohio (ESCCO) to establish an Ohio Network of Education Transformation (ONET) that provided support for implementing identified models to transform the lowest achieving schools in Ohio. The ESCCO provided a trained corps of experienced practitioners to deliver intensive targeted assistance to school transformation teams, principals, and teachers. Goals of ONET:

1. To build the knowledge, skills, and leadership capacity of school principals
2. To enhance the quality of daily classroom instruction, assessment and intervention.

**BACKGROUND**
ONET innovation grants were awarded to schools to implement one of five educational models or another proposed model of reform. In the first year of ONET, 37 LEAs received grants ranging from $43,000-600,000 for three years. LEA awards included 1-4 buildings, for a total of 84 school sites engaged in ONET-funded transformation. Of the 84 sites, 57 schools proposed to implement one of the five approved innovation models.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th># of School Sites</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ASIA</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>AVID</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early College</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Tech</td>
<td>13</td>
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<tr>
<td>STEM</td>
<td>8</td>
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**RESEARCH DESIGN**
This study examined the implementation and preliminary impact of ONET funding for the five innovation models using a mixed-methods, case study approach for each model and a cross-case analysis of all models. Questions related to implementation fidelity; impact on principals, teachers, students, and school culture; and patterns in implementation and impact across sites guided the research protocol.

**DATA**
The OERC research team conducted case studies by visiting two sites for each model for a total of ten school sites to collect data on the implementation process and impact on principal, teacher and student behaviors; student performance outcomes; and school culture. The ten schools were selected based on region, typology, preliminary analysis of school performance data over the past five years, and discussions with ONET support team members regarding progress of ONET grant recipients. Conducting observations and interviews at two sites per model assisted the research team in verifying findings attributable to the innovation model implementation versus site-specific characteristics.
Five years of **quantitative data** were complied and analyzed using school report cards to compare historical and current data on academic achievement, attendance rate, and when appropriate, graduation rate.

**PRELIMINARY FINDINGS**

In depth **qualitative analysis** of observation and survey data from each site are in process. Analysis assesses the fidelity of implementation and impact by comparing the model’s key elements with the evidence of these elements in the school site. Survey results indicated that 83% of teachers and administrators reported they are not yet fully implementing their model. Even so, preliminary analysis of site visit field notes indicate that the innovation models are positively impacting pockets of school culture, and subgroups of teachers’ and students’ behaviors. Two key factors affecting implementation fidelity are building leadership and the role of transition team members in leading the innovation. All sites reported the important role the building leader plays in creating a supportive environment for innovation and encouraging teachers to take leadership roles in the implementation process. Buildings with high principal and teacher turnover struggled to implement the innovations, while building with strong, stable leadership excelled.

Analysis of data thru 2013, indicate no significant changes in standardized student test results have occurred during the three years of funding for implementation of the innovation models. However, these data do not include 2014 state performance measures, which will not be available until later this year. It is also worth noting that measurable impacts of change initiatives on student test performance require time to manifest and may become evident over time.

**POLICY IMPLICATION**

Findings from this study will help inform understandings about the implementation process and its impact on the effectiveness of each of the innovation models with school site as the unit of analysis. Future adopters may find guidance and avoid challenges uncovered thru the examination of the experiences of these case study sites.

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**Suggested Citation**