Driver

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Principles in Practice: Bank Street Education Center

Adapt the knowledge management framework

The Bank Street Education Center (Education Center) is division of the Bank Street College of Education that partners with schools and districts to disrupt inequity through system-level change. By helping design better educational experiences for both children and adults in deep collaboration with program partners — from teachers and families to policymakers and higher education leaders — the Education Center creates customized approaches to support that engender strengths-based, learner-centered, and equitable educational practices.

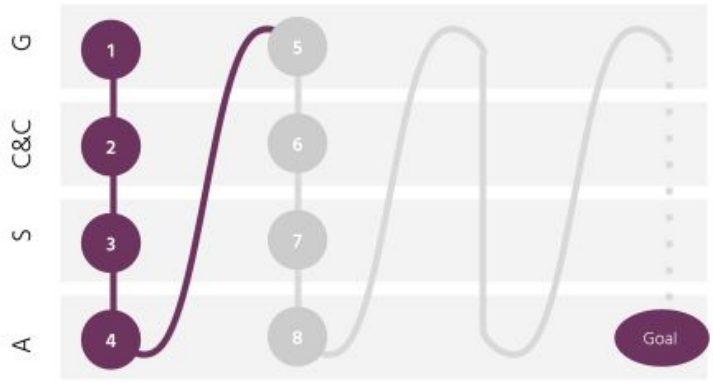
Currently, the Education Center facilitates two improvement networks: the Yonkers Public Schools NSI (YPS NSI) and Brooklyn South NSI (BKS NSI), launched in October 2018 and January 2021, respectively. Both networks aim to increase the percentage of Black, Latino, and/or low-income 8th graders who are on-track to graduate. As an entry-point to that broader objective, the networks have zoomed in on math instruction. In both networks school teams, comprised of teachers and school leaders, design and engage in continuous improvement-driven change efforts at their sites, receiving regular support from Education Center staff at monthly coaching meetings and professional learning sessions.

This case explores how Education Center network leaders leveraged a knowledge management cycle to generate, consolidate, codify, spread, and apply stronger supports for network participants.

In 2019, a cross-sectional group of Education Center staff — including coaches and content and measurement specialists — used the organization's strong internal learning structures to elevate an emergent issue: **during PDSA cycles, network participants were effectively measuring and discussing the impact of new interventions (e.g., new exit ticket protocols) but weren't always connecting those insights to the network's broader theory of change.**

Coaches wondered what supports they could offer to help teams (a) more explicitly link their interventions to the network's shared theory of improvement and (b) measure not just the immediate impact of the interventions but also progress on the networks core drivers and aim. The team hypothesized that a protocol for the Study portion of the PDSA cycle might help.

Critically, Education Center leaders understood that their objective wasn't ultimately the generation and codification of a protocol but instead the spread and consistent application of the concepts captured in that protocol by all YPS and BKS NSI teams. With this long-term objective in mind, the team planned backwards, outlining the knowledge management steps they would need to take as network leaders to enable that long-term outcome.



On the next page, read more about how network leaders approached each phase of the knowledge management cycle.

0 GETTING ORGANIZED

Before beginning their first knowledge management cycle, the Education Center team took time to organize and set boundaries for their work. They identified team members well suited to research the problem at hand and convened a four-person lead learner working group. The group honed in on the key question they wanted to answer: **How do we design tools and processes that support all teams in conducting PDSA cycles that attend to measurement of the driver and aim *and* bring the full theory of change into the conversation?**

1 GENERATION

Hub Learning on Effective Practices: With a clear question in mind, the learning lead team dove into the literature, identifying resources that would help them design a protocol to support school-level inquiry work.

2 CONSOLIDATION & CAPTURE

Developing the Protocol: After a period of individual study, the team synthesized their learning as a group and surfaced the core concepts that they believed should drive the PDSA work and undergird any tool they developed. With these core concepts in hand, the team worked on capturing that learning in an approachable, user-friendly protocol. Thinking towards the strategic end goal of widespread use, the hub team planned carefully, aligning the protocol with existing network routines so that it didn't feel burdensome for participants. They also worked with coaches to draft several versions of protocol instructions to accommodate teams with differing entry points to the work.

3 SHARING

Sharing the Protocol with the Network: The learning lead team then shared the draft protocol with the full leadership team and with participants. As the lead learning working group launched this communication effort, they kept its application in mind, training teams and coaches on the underlying concepts captured in the protocol and practicing its use at network cohort meetings and coaching sessions.

4 APPLICATION

Piloting the Protocol: Teams, with the support of coaches, have now begun using the protocol. As with any other intervention, the hub team is using a shared coaching log to track data and feedback on (a) whether the tool is motivating a shift in conversations to more deeply center the theory of change, (b) where and how it has been adapted, and (c) in what ways it could be improved.

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Learning about Implementation: As with any tool the Bank Street team develops, the hub will generate new learning from the data collected across teams during site-based protocol application.

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Refining the Protocol: With implementation data in hand, the team will consolidate team-based learning, refining the protocol and ensuring it (a) achieves its objective of prompting participants to discuss their work within the context of the theory of change and (b) remains relevant to team learning needs. In particular, the hub team will reflect on the types and depth of conversation the protocol has prompted. The hub plans to capture that learning on the the design of the protocol, refining the tool over time to ensure maximum utility.

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Expanding Use of the Protocol: Bank Street is piloting the protocol in the YPS NSI, but plans to scale it to other networks they manage, including the BKS NSI. The hub team will use learnings from their cycle 1 sharing processes to improve their approach to communicating the protocol and its core principles.

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Applying the Protocol at Scale: As the refined protocol is applied in additional networks and with new teams, the hub will support robust data gathering and feedback on implementation.

Appendix: YPS NSI Theory of Improvement