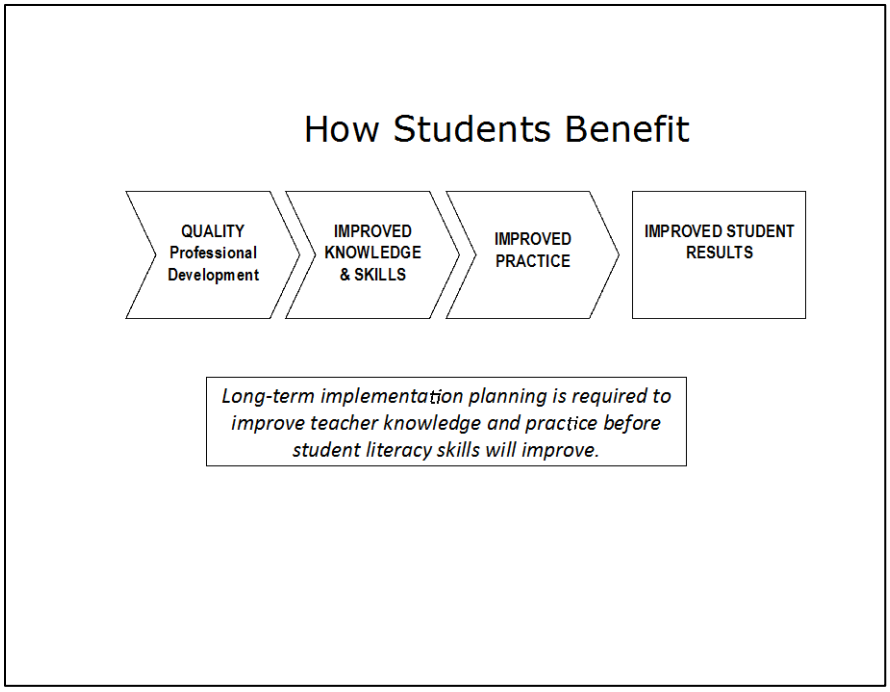
Supporting Implementation:
Tapping into *Implementation Science*

Keys to Literacy believes that implementation planning is essential to translating the quality training we provide into the increased teacher knowledge and improved practice that is required to improve student literacy skills.



We have learned from years of experience with hundreds of school districts that choosing to adopt our evidence-based instructional programs is only a first step. For the training to be successful, we need to partner with schools and districts to develop realistic implementation plans.

A large body of research exists about effective models for successful, long-lasting implementation of research-based instructional programs such as Keys to Literacy programs. Professional development will only be effective if initial training is part of a long-term implementation plan that is strongly supported by administrators and integrated into overall school and district plans.

The term **Implementation Science** is used to describe these research findings. In summary, once an evidence-based program has been chosen, the implementation process should begin by selecting, training, and coaching the teachers and other staff in the full and faithful use of the program (i.e., using the program with fidelity). Next, teacher proficiency and commitment to the program must be developed. Training without coaching is insufficient. Training and coaching initially is provided by the organization which developed the program (i.e., Keys to Literacy), but the responsibility must shift to in-house coaching and support. Leadership is essential as administrators take necessary action to address logistical, administrative, personnel, and funding factors. It often takes 2-4 years to fully implement a program, and implementation typically follows phases. The final implementation stage is sustaining the program to ensure that the program will remain faithfully implemented in future years as the original teachers and administrators are replaced with new educators.

Fullan (1982, 2001) identified three major phases of school reform that are essential:

1. Initiation: The process that results in the decision to move forward with an educational initiative and the period in which an initiative is adopted.

2. Implementation: During this stage, the initiative is put into practice – typically spans 1 to 3 years. This phase requires time, effort, and clarity of purpose. Sometimes there can be an "implementation dip" - things get worse before they get better as people grapple with the meaning and skills of change. Even with the best initiation planning, implementers will experience bumps in the road.

3. Continuance: The process of institutionalizing the initiative. The infrastructure, policies, and mutual accountability developed in the initiation and implementation phases will determine whether the initiative is sustained beyond the initial implementation. As implementation moves toward continuance, it is easy to assume the intervention does not need attention. Teachers may drift, come and go, and the gains made begin to diminish.

The National Implementation Research Network (NIRN) has taken the lead in supporting state and district implementation of evidence-based instructional practices. In 2005, NIRN published the seminal report *Implementation Research: A Synthesis of the Literature* (Fixsen et al., 2005) that expanded Fullan's three stages to these five stages that are essential for long-term implementation:

Implementation Science Stages *(Blase & Fixsen, 2013)*

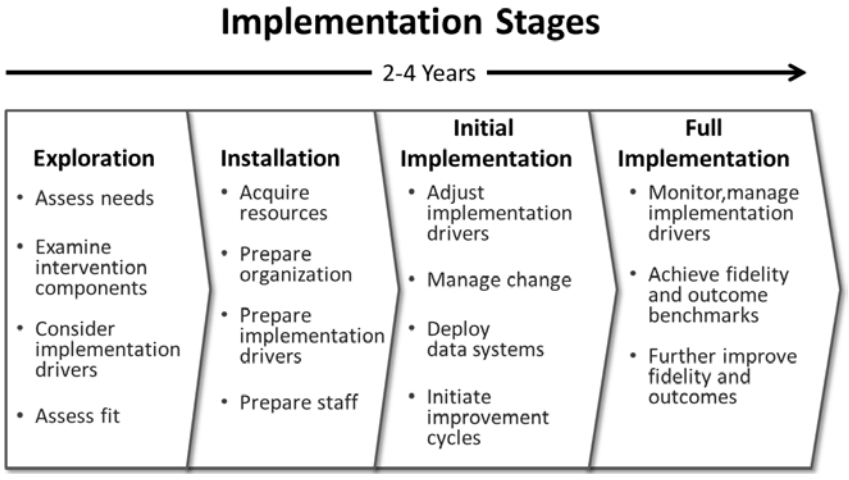
Exploration: Assess the potential match between the program/practice and school needs, and make a decision to proceed or not. Also assess potential barriers to success (e.g., funding, staffing, system change)

Program Installation: Resources and structural supports are put in place. An implementation action plan should be developed.

Initial Implementation: Changes in skill levels, organizational capacity, organizational culture, and so on require education, practice, and time to mature. Also called, "the awkward stage". Attempts to implement new program/practice effectively may end at this point, overwhelmed by the proximal and distal influences on practice and management.

Full Implementation: The new learning becomes integrated into practitioner, organizational, and community practices, policies, and procedures.
Innovation: Refine and expand. Must discriminate between drift and innovation. First implement with fidelity before innovating.

Sustainability: Planning for long-term implementation and survival of the program/practice.



Fixsen and colleagues (2005) determined that successfully implemented practices and programs include these components:

- Ongoing consultation and coaching: Most skills needed by successful practitioners can be introduced in initial training but really are learned on the job with the help of coaches. Coaching is the principal way in

which behavior change is brought about for teachers at the beginning stages of implementation and throughout the life of evidence-based practices and programs.

- Staff and program evaluation: Designed to assess the use and outcomes of the skills that are taught in training, and reinforced and expanded in coaching processes. Assessment of practitioner performance and measures of fidelity of program use provide important feedback regarding the progress of implementation efforts.

- Facilitative administrative support: Leadership is provided and makes use of a range of data inputs to inform decisions making, support the overall processes, and keep staff organized and focused on implementation.

Here are some resources about *Implementation Science*:

National Implementation Research Network
http://nirn.fpg.unc.edu/

The Active Implementation Hub
http://implementation.fpg.unc.edu/

State Implementation & Scaling-Up of Evidence-Based Practices Center
http://sisep.fpg.unc.edu/

References:

Blase, K. & Fixsen, D. (2013). Stages of implementation analysis: Where are we? State Implementation & Scaling Up of Evidence-based Practices. Retrieved from http://implementation.fpg.unc.edu/sites/implementation.fpg.unc.edu/files/resources/NIRN-Education-StagesOfImplementationAnalysisWhereAreWe.pdf

Fullan, M. (2001). *The new meaning of educational change.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Fullan, M. (1982). *The meaning of educational change*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Fixsen, D. L., Naoom, S. F., Blase, K. A., Friedman, R. M. & 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).