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AIFT Training

February 21-24
Jacksonville, Florida

Organization

Kansas Technical Assistance System Network (TASN) provides technical assistance to support school districts' systematic implementation of evidence-based practices. Our focus was on two provider groups:

The Kansas Multi-Tier System of Supports (MTSS) project provides resource development, training, and support for district wide implementation of the Kansas MTSS framework. This includes implementation preschool through high school and includes support for reading, math, behavior, early childhood, and secondary transition.

The TASN Autism and Tertiary Behavior Supports (ATBS) project provides training and coaching of educators to support students who have challenging behaviors and/or complex needs.

Definition



Team members who attended AIFT, all of whom are stakeholders in the TASN teams being supported in this process, served as the core group in creating the definition. While other options were discussed for selecting a group that would engage in this process, this seemed an appropriate choice because the members represented different team initiatives, projects, and roles.

The foundation for this process began with acknowledging what, on our teams, serves us well, and what topic might best support continued growth. The process for choosing the definition was filled with rich discussion, supplemented with

frequent references to the materials and resources provided by AI training and subsequent communication.

While our activities on the TASN teams may vary, it was clear that all TASN work relies on meaningful relationships to successfully support educators and students in classrooms, buildings, and districts. This includes the relationships within our teams as well. Even as other topics were considered, all members of the group agreed that strong, trust-based relationships are essential to promoting professional growth.

Our core group included the following people:

Lee Stickle, ATBS Director

Jane Goetz, Lori Chambers, Gail Ferguson, and Sarah Behrens, ATBS

Krystal Porter and Susan Shiffelbein, MTSS

Dates for planning sessions:

March 6, 13, 27

April 4

May 2, 31

June 1, 20

July 11 (final review)

Discovery

The inquiry session was held on July 12 and 13, 2017, at the KU Edwards Campus in Kansas City; the location provided comfortable settings for lecture, group work, and work with partners.

Interviews were conducted in pairs with 15 minutes being assigned to each person. "Questions are fateful" and the commitment to intentional listening provided a foundation for the interviews. Comments in the evaluation made it clear that the questions, process, and resulting information gained from the interview had an impact on the participants. When asked about a practice that they would implement, a sample of the comments that related specifically to the interview process included the following:

- "I can apply this to interviews and interactions with school employees, families, and students."
- "Interviewing for strengths, what's working, and times when staff feel energized"
- "I will listen to understand"

Although we were facilitating the training, we decided that we would participate in all activities as well. For me, this provided additional insight into all processes, including the interview and identifying the forces that emerged as

life-giving. Many of the forces identified were similar and centered on relationships. They included valuing others' perspectives, being open to vulnerability, and being mutually reliant – all to learn, collaborate, and embrace growth and change. Participants in my group consistently mentioned that these forces are important in work, but also in their personal interactions.

Dream

Dreaming began with questions for consideration as teams planned how they would visually plan and share their images. A few of the questions that provided focus and promoted thoughtful conversation in our small group included the following:

- Is it provocative?
- Is it affirmative?
- Does it provoke action?

While there were a variety of materials available to participants to use, most teams took advantage of drawing to share their information. Three examples are included --



Again, both in the group I helped facilitate, and in comments from evaluations, this was cited as a component that would be useful not only as it related to this specific inquiry, but also as a process that would be valuable in other work on our teams.

Destiny & Design

If I had to choose a single word to describe the discussion during this phase, it would be “energizing”. Many of the people on our team have benefited from research and trainings in processes that are similar to this. Nevertheless, the discussion focused on the way the AI process refined their thinking about working as a team. “Next steps” were discussed and in some cases, put into

writing; these steps included considering opportunities for sharing this process with team members who did not attend the training and changing systems and documents that are used in our work. One of the comments in the evaluation document indicated the level of change anticipated and expressed by many participants. "I will search for what is working in processes and strengths in people."

Our team is not done! We continue to explore and evolve as we implement our "destiny and design". Our next meeting is planned for September. It is important to note that an AI mindset and practices are being embedded in our practices. Small team meetings for specific initiatives are beginning with questions like "What went well?" or "What was the most energizing component?". These questions set a tone that impacts all discussion, planning, and implementation.

Personal Reflections

My vision for supporting our teams through an inquiry process was that it would promote deepened, trust-based relationships between members of our team, resulting in changes that positively affect the way we plan, learn, grow, and support Kansas educators. As a facilitator who also had the opportunity to participate in all components of the process, it gave me insight into the process itself, and into relating to participants in different ways than my job might typically have provided.

There were many moments that were impactful for me. The willingness of team members to allow themselves to be vulnerable and share deeply personal information; acknowledging that doing so was based on trust. Listening to highly skilled, talented individuals recognize their own strengths and strengths of others, and creating a plan to capitalize on those attributes to grow and change. The constant willingness of all team members to learn and then use that knowledge to change was both energizing and perhaps surprising, given the level of expertise on our team.

Finally, perhaps those "best" moments occurred not during the training, but in the weeks and months since the training. As mentioned above, listening to carefully crafted questions that are being embedded into meetings and watching intentional statements provide focus on positive topics make it clear that we are working toward "generative" processes. That will result in significant, sustainable change for our organization, and the systems and people we support.

Materials attached

PowerPoint

Participant Guidebook

Permission

Permission for sharing both the information included in this report and the attachments is granted.