12-2004

Dashboard Lights: Monitoring Implementation of District Instructional Reform Strategies

Jonathan A. Supovitz
University of Pennsylvania, JONS@GSE.UPENN.EDU

John M Weathers
University of Pennsylvania

Dashboard Lights: Monitoring Implementation of District Instructional Reform Strategies

Abstract

In this report, the authors describe the system implemented in Duval County Public Schools (Florida) to monitor the district's instructional reform efforts and the influences of the system on teachers and school and district leaders. The system, called the Standards Implementation Snapshot System, was implemented by John Fryer, Superintendent of Duval Public Schools, in 2002. The snapshot system seeks to take a "snapshot" at a point in time of the depth of implementation of the district's standards-based reform initiatives.

This report is the story of the development and influence of the snapshot system.

Disciplines

Curriculum and Instruction | Educational Leadership | Education Policy

Comments

View on the CPRE website.

Dashboard Lights

Monitoring Implementation of District Instructional Reform Strategies

Jonathan A. Supovitz
John Weathers

Consortium for Policy Research in Education
University of Pennsylvania

December 2004

Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Introduction

Duval County Florida superintendent John Fryer was not used to flying blind. A retired Air Force major general and former tactical fighter wing commander new to school district leadership, Fryer was used to having a control panel packed with information. In front of him in the cockpit, Fryer had a wide range of continually updated data from which he could adjust his flight path and inform his actions. "When you're a fighter pilot, you rely on that information to guide your decision making," he said. Not having any equivalent instruments in his position as superintendent, Fryer wondered, "How do I know what's happening in our school district?" (personal interview, January 11, 2000). In his effort to remedy this problem, Fryer sought a dashboard of data indicators to keep him updated on his district's reform efforts.

Fryer was hired in 1998 as the superintendent of Duval County, one of the 20 largest school districts in the United States. Fryer's tenure is notable for his tenacious efforts to implement a particular vision of standards-based instructional practice across the district. To spearhead the district's efforts, Fryer forged a distinctive partnership with the National Center on Education and the Economy (NCEE), which provides tools and expertise to build teachers' and school leaders' capacity to deliver standards-based instruction within a framework of comprehensive school reform. Concurrent revisions of the district's mathematics and science curricula and professional development systems, with the assistance of strong local leadership and support from the National Science Foundation, helped to form a coherent and philosophically compatible change program. These efforts have resulted in significant and sustained improvements in the district's test performance relative to comparable counties in Florida (Supovitz & Snyder, 2003).

Throughout their journey, Fryer and his leadership team have persistently searched for ways to build a dashboard of indicators that provide data on the influence of the district's

strategic changes on the practices of the district's 7,300 teachers, the test performance of the district's 127,000 students, and the leadership of the district's 149 schools. The superintendent developed a room in the school board building, dubbed the "mission control center," in which indicators of district progress on its five strategic goals (academic performance, safe schools, accountability, learning communities, and high performance management teams) are tracked. The vision of the dashboard also led Duval County education leaders to develop their own system to monitor schools' implementation of the district's standards-based reform efforts. The system is called the Standards Implementation Snapshot System. The snapshot system seeks to take a "snapshot" at a point in time of the depth of implementation of the district's standards-based reform initiatives. The system was conceived in the summer of 2002, and at the time of this report is completing its second year of use across the district. This is the story of the development and influence of the snapshot system.

Fryer's search for dashboard indicators is indicative of a more generalized set of problems with which education leaders have long struggled. Foremost, education leaders lack a clear, detailed, and timely perspective on what is happening in schools and classrooms as a consequence of their reform initiatives (Leithwood & Aitken, 1995). If results are weak or mixed (as is often the case), leaders are typically unable to distinguish between ineffective reform ideas and poor implementation exactly because they lack an accurate picture of the depth of implementation. Argyris and Schön (1974; 1978) embodied this idea in their distinction between *theory of action*, or the logic advanced by advocates of reform to explain how an initiative is supposed to bring about intended results, and theory in use, how programs or policies are actually carried out. In essence, in order for reformers to advance understanding of the efficacy of their reform ideas, they map their theory in use against their theory of action. This mapping process reveals to what extent problems are due to a problematic theory of action, or whether

weak implementation, the *theory in use*, is the source of poor, or mixed, results.

From a different perspective and tradition, the strategic planning literature has long incorporated a similar call for evaluation of activities and results relative to goals. For example, Koteen (1989) laid out the sequence of strategic planning as mission formulation, strategy determination, action specification, and appraisal of results. Similar approaches, such as Management by Objectives (MBO) and other goal-setting plans contain comparable monitoring components (Caroll, 2000). More recent formulations like Balanced Scorecard include a similar emphasis on the monitoring of implementation and impact (Kaplan & Norton, 1996). The incorporation of these organizational monitoring and accountability strategies, commonly used in the business and nonprofit worlds, are also pervasive on the business management side of educational organizations. Facilities management, budgeting, and inventory monitoring are some of the areas to which the monitoring component of strategic planning is frequently applied in education.

Some components of the strategic planning cycle are also applied to instructional delivery. Yet systematic implementation monitoring of instructional improvement efforts is often missing or weak. Districts and schools commonly formulate missions that incorporate instructional goals, and determine strategies to achieve their missions. They then monitor student performance results to determine the effectiveness of their strategies. This sequence is quite explicit in the school improvement planning process that is commonplace in schools across the country, although the instructional goals in these missions often lack the specificity required for adequate monitoring and assessment of results (Supovitz & Klein, 2002). The proliferation of student outcome data and systems to manipulate it, spurred by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, is a testament to how commonplace this means of assessing the achievement of instructional goals has become. Yet one of the most essential phases of strategic planning—monitoring of the implementation of instructional delivery—has rarely been systematically applied to monitoring of the attainment of instructional goals.

Why haven't instructional delivery systems undergone the same systematic scrutiny as have the managerial functions within education organizations? This may be attributable to the belief that instruction is not considered a routine-based activity, and therefore is not perceived to be readily monitored against a set of standard indicators (Elmore, 1993; Floden et al., 1988; Meyer & Rowan, 1978). An alternative hypothesis is the historical and cultural autonomy that teachers have typically held over instructional delivery (Lortie, 1975; Weick, 1976). Weick coined the term "loose coupling" to describe this phenomenon and the resulting uncertain relationship between the organization of education and its outcomes. In a highly autonomous system where teachers are seen to know best what their students need and are best left to determine how to teach them, there is no perceived need to monitor implementation, only results.

Others view the implementation of complex technologies such as instructional reforms as a problem of organizational learning. In this view, the monitoring of the implementation of an innovation becomes a measure of the spread of knowledge throughout the organization. Organization theorists have likened the challenge of strategy implementation to one of creating the organizational learning required to implement the strategy (Gillen, 2000). In one view, implementation essentially becomes a problem of teaching people with sufficient specificity the knowledge required to implement a reform. This is both because a larger group of people are required to implement the strategy (Gillen, 2000) and because those on the ground who are critical to the policy's success have had little, if anything, to do with its formulation (Wheelen & Hunger, 1997). An alternative strain of organizational learning views embedding a culture of systematic inquiry and continually deeper learning about what it takes to enact reform as the real engine of meaningful change (Fullan, Bertani, & Quinn, 2004; Supovitz & Klein, 2002).

The complexity of teaching and learning, the history of teacher autonomy, the loosely coupled organization of schools and school districts, and the tremendous challenge of deeply entrenching organizational learning into an organizational point to the difficulties of both implementing large-scale instructional reforms, and developing systems to monitor them. To do so implies, as is the case in Duval County, that district leaders have a distinct and fairly well specified vision of instructional reform that they seek teachers across the system to employ. The administrative sanction of a particular curriculum and form of instructional delivery legitimates the need to systematically monitor its implementation.

In Duval County, district leaders advocate a particular brand of standards-based instructional delivery. All teachers are supposed to be knowledgeable of the expectations for student performance expressed in the Florida Sunshine State Standards and the New Standards Performance Standards. Literacy teachers are expected to use readers and writers workshop structures to engage students in authentic reading and writing experiences in a variety of genres. District leaders advocate inquiry-based activities in both mathematics and science. Mathematics curriculum is organized around the Investigations curriculum in the elementary grades, the Connected Mathematics curriculum in the middle grades, and the College Preparatory Mathematics curriculum in high school. The science curriculum is based upon a comprehensive approach structured around materials approved by the National Science Foundation. The district advocates an array of particular strategies to support students needing additional assistance. Teachers and school leaders are expected to use student performance data to inform their decision making. These district-wide expectations form a common basis against which implementation can be measured.

In this article, we describe Duval's system to monitor the district's instructional reform efforts and the influences of the system on teachers and school and district leaders. First, we describe how the snapshot system is designed to work and articulate the distinguishing characteristics

of the snapshot system. Then, we briefly discuss the design, data sources, and analytic methods used for this study. We then describe the effects of the snapshot system on district efforts, as reported by principals and district administrators. We conclude the article by discussing the implications of such an implementation monitoring system for district reform efforts.

How the Snapshot System Works

Snapshots are pictures at a particular point in time of the depth to which schools in Duval County are implementing key elements of the district's reform vision. The snapshot system represents a true co-development project between leaders of the Duval County Public Schools and researchers at the Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE)[1]. In this uniquely collaborative effort, members of both organizations have taken ownership of the process, contributing their expertise and influence. In this section, we briefly summarize how the snapshot system is designed to work.

In the summer of each year, the district's superintendent and leadership team develop a list of three to five topics that are candidates for snapshots for the upcoming year. The topics are carefully chosen to reflect key elements of the district's Framework for the Implementation of Standards, which articulates the district's vision for standards-based reform, and the district's priorities for the upcoming year. Topics are also sequenced to follow the district leadership training schedule.

Each of the selected topics becomes the focus of two sets of school visits during the upcoming year. However, well before school visits occur, a team of district "experts" on a particular topic are brought together to develop a rubric on that area for the snapshot school visit. Snapshot topics in Duval County to date have included Understanding and Using Standards, Connecting Student Work to Standards in Reading, Connecting Student Work to Standards in

Mathematics, Safety Nets, Data-Driven Decision Making, and Professional Learning Communities. The rubric development team specifies the characteristics at the school, classroom, and student levels as to what comprises different levels of implementation. The rubric development team also constructs an evidence form, which is a short list of questions for school leaders, teachers, and/or students, as well as a list of artifacts for which the data collectors should look. These questions and artifacts are carefully designed to give opportunities for respondents to provide evidence of implementation, as represented on the rubric. The rubrics are then circulated throughout the district and vetted. A sample rubric and evidence form are provided in Appendix A.

Finally, before the actual snapshot, the principals and district administrators who make up the snapshot data collection teams attend a half-day training in which they "practice" the snapshot in a small number of schools trying out the rubrics and evidence forms. After the training, they return to a central location for a debriefing and clarification session. Based on this and other collaborative feedback, modifications to the rubric and evidence forms are made.

Snapshots occur monthly throughout the school year and are conducted by two to three trained principals and district administrators (depending on school size). Each month, this cadre of trained principals and district administrators, called snapshot data collectors, visit a representative sample of schools in the district to collect data on a particular element of the district's reform efforts. The data collectors are selected by district administrators based on their knowledge of standards as well as their representation of the district as a whole.

The sample of schools they visit is carefully chosen to represent the district in terms of prior achievement, reform experience, grade ranges, and region within the district. The sample can, therefore, be regarded as representative of the district as a whole. In 2002–2003, the first year of the snapshot system, all schools were visited once during the school year. In 2003–2004, the samples were increased so that each school was visited twice during the school year.

The snapshot data collection teams visit each school in the sample for approximately three hours. As previously described, the visit is focused upon a particular topic that is central to the district's reform efforts. In addition to the rubric specifying different stages of implementation of that particular element of the district's reform efforts, each snapshot team is equipped with instructions on how to carryout their visit, a list of people to talk to (who could be principals, leadership team members, teachers, and/or students, depending on the focus of the snapshot), a prespecified set of questions to ask, and a defined set of artifacts to examine (see Appendix B).

Meeting first with the school's principal, the team develops a sampling frame of individuals and classrooms to visit and talk to in particular grades and subjects (depending somewhat on the topic of the snapshot). From this sampling frame, together with the principal they select a sample of teachers that is representative of the school. Team members may wish to split up the sample and conduct visits/interviews individually or conduct their visits/interviews as a team. They then spread out and collect the data upon which the snapshot is based.

After completing the data collection, the team assesses the school on the areas outlined in the rubric, using the evidence collected during their visits/interviews. Using this evidence, the team makes judgments about the degree to which the school has implemented the components of the snapshot rubric. After coming to consensus, the team meets with the school's principal to debrief and provide constructive feedback, sticking closely to what they observed and why they reached the conclusions that they did. In an effort to minimize inappropriate use, principals of host schools are provided with guidelines of appropriate ways they can use the feedback with their faculty. For the snapshot data collectors, the substance and conclusion of their visit is confidential and should not be discussed after they leave the host school.

A snapshot itself is completed within a window of approximately two weeks, which allows the snapshot data collectors and host school to schedule a visit time which is convenient for all. After completing their snapshot visit, a member of each snapshot team is asked to enter their ratings and comments onto a password-protected website. The results of the snapshot from the sample set of schools are aggregated to produce a picture of implementation of that particular topic across the district. Importantly, the aggregation provides anonymity to teachers and schools, reinforcing the stated purpose of the snapshots to capture district-wide depth of implementation of elements of the district's frameworks. Graphical representations of the results and comments provided by the snapshot teams are produced. An excerpt of snapshot results is shown in Appendix C.

The snapshot results are produced in time for monthly principals' meetings. Before each principals' meeting, the district's five regional directors examine the results, discuss their meaning, and develop a set of guiding questions for principals to explore as they examine the snapshot results. During regional breakout sessions at the monthly principals' meeting, the regional directors facilitate a conversation with their principals (there are approximately 35 schools in each region), seeking to identify areas where the district is strongly implementing, barriers to implementation, and areas where implementation could be deepened, as well as seeking to cross-germinate and capture innovative strategies that schools are using. The regional directors take notes on their group's conversation. These notes are compiled across the five regions and fed back to all principals and district training developers.

Distinguishing Characteristics of the Snapshot System

The snapshot system contains a set of key characteristics that distinguish it from other implementation monitoring systems, educational data systems, and strategic planning initiatives. In this section, we articulate some of the key characteristics of the snapshots and discuss how these differ from other systems.

- *Snapshots provide a picture of system-wide implementation of district reform efforts.* The snapshot system is designed to capture the depth of implementation of reform efforts *across the district* at a particular point in time. No individual teachers or schools are identified when results are produced. The only picture provided is implementation across grade levels (elementary/middle/high) so that patterns of district-wide implementation are the focus. In this sense, this is a district accountability mechanism.

- *Snapshot topics are carefully aligned with district reform strategies.* The topics for snapshots are carefully chosen so that they reflect district leaders' priorities. In this way they signal to school leaders and teachers what district leaders care about.

- *Snapshot results are reliable and valid.* Careful attention is paid to producing high levels of reliability and validity of the results. The sample of schools for each snapshot is deliberately chosen to reflect a representative sample of the district in terms of prior achievement (previous year's state accountability grade), reform experience (prior participation in the major school reform programs in the district), grade level (elementary/middle/high), and region (the district is broken into five regions). In each school, classrooms are randomly sampled to provide a fair representation of particular grade levels and subject areas in each school. Common protocols are used so that data collection at each school is as uniform as possible. Data collectors are trained in advance of the snapshots and conduct their data collection in teams so that assessments of implementation reflect consensus among team members.

- *Snapshot results are timely*. Each snapshot team enters their results onto the district's website. The results are then aggregated in

time for discussion at the next monthly principals' meeting.

- *Snapshots are developed and interpreted collaboratively*. The snapshot rubrics are developed and refined with wide input. The snapshot results are discussed and explored for meaning and implications each month by school and district leaders, rather than simply reported. This structure and process is designed to reinforce a district-wide learning community that focuses conversation on issues of supporting and improving instruction.

- *Snapshots focus on intermediary outcomes*. While many monitoring systems emphasize impacts on student test results, this system deliberately focuses on the link between a reform initiative and student outcomes, which consequently may shed light on the success of professional development designed to roll out reform initiatives. Through it, the district seeks to understand the degree of implementation of the district's reform efforts as an important complement to examining impacts on student test performance.

- *Snapshots facilitate the building of a district-wide learning community.* The design, implementation, and analysis of the monthly snapshots constitute a collaborative process that involves members from all levels of the district in substantive conversations around the core processes of schooling (teaching and learning) and the necessary structures to support these core processes.

These attributes of the snapshot system distinguish it from other monitoring systems. The snapshots formalize and build upon a technique increasingly used in American education in which school leaders walk through a school to observe implementation and provide feedback to teachers and inform support strategies. These semi-structured observations are called "focus walks" or "walk-throughs" by the America's Choice school reform design.

Unlike the monitoring approach advocated by Leithwood and Aitken (1995), which relies heavily on prefabricated surveys, the data gathered during the snapshots are primarily direct observational data where some concrete evidence (artifacts) is required to make a judgment about the implementation of a particular instructional or instructional support activity. The information gathered in the snapshots is thus likely to be more accurate and useful, assuming adequate training of the data collectors. They are in the classrooms and schools directly observing and making evaluative judgments about the quality of the instruction and instructional supports as they actually exist rather than as reported by teachers.

However, unlike the monitoring system proposed by Leithwood and Aitken (1995), the snapshot system is not comprehensive. Rather, it is targeted and very specific, especially in terms of the specific artifacts, behaviors, and responses that comprise quality in the specific area being assessed. Finally, the snapshots are more contextualized than other district monitoring systems. Leithwood and Aitken and organizations like the National Society for the Study of Education (NSSE) have developed extensive and well thought-out questionnaires for district use, whereas the snapshot system is internally developed on the basis of priorities and goals of the district. By using prefabricated instruments, an important learning process for the district and its participants may be lost or at least curtailed.

Study Design, Data Sources, and Analysis Methods

The data upon which this article is built come from three sources. The first data source is intimate knowledge about the system and access to all documentation related to its development. The authors of this article have been providing evaluation and technical assistance services to Duval County since 1999 and were involved in the development of the snapshot system. In this

capacity they are thoroughly knowledgeable about the snapshot system and how it was developed, having had access to both the documentation about the system and attributes that were considered and then rejected.

The second data source is the results of a series of formal interviews with a sample of both the data collectors (both principals and district administrators) and the principals of schools that were visited (called host principals). The sample of host principals was chosen to represent the range of schools in the district, based on the following criteria: school level, reform experience of the school, region within the district, and the state assigned school performance grade. During the 2002–2003 school year, the authors of this paper conducted a series of telephone interviews with samples of both the data collectors (eight interviews) and host principals of schools that were visited (eight interviews). Using structured interview protocols, data collectors were asked about their training, their perceptions of the snapshot system overall, and their most recent snapshot experience; what they learned from their experiences; how the system may have influenced their own work; how the snapshot fit with other district initiatives; and their views about what could be improved. Host principals were asked about their perception of the snapshot system and the qualification of the data collectors, including their perception of the accuracy of the assessment, what they learned from their experience, what they planned to do with what they learned, and how they had prepared for the visit. All interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed. They were then analyzed to identify emerging themes, formally coded, and reanalyzed within each theme to produce the categories of this paper.

The third data source is the results of a survey that was administered to all principals in the district who attended a monthly principals' meeting in April, 2003. Of the 149 principals in Duval County, 126 completed a survey for a response rate of 85%. All principals were asked about their experience with the snapshot system (all schools in the district had been visited at least once by a snapshot team); how useful the

snapshots were to them and their faculty; whether and how they made use of the snapshot rubrics; and the extent to which the resulting data and discussions in the monthly principals meetings were informative. An additional set of questions was included for those principals who were also snapshot data collectors. The survey data were analyzed using statistical analysis software, producing simple frequencies and chi-square analyses of significant differences over time and between relevant groups.

Influence of the Snapshot System

The development of the snapshot system began with the search for an answer to district leaders' question: How do we know to what extent teachers and school leaders are implementing our reform ideas? To answer this question, the snapshots began with the relatively modest goal (which was ambitious enough in its own right!) of producing valid pictures at particular points in time (hence snapshots) of the implementation of district-wide reform initiatives. But as the system began to take shape, and as we began talking to educators about its impacts, we discovered that its influences were deeper and wider ranging than originally envisioned. As one principal told us in the spring of 2003, "Every meeting I go to this year, I hear something about snapshot and I hear the word being used in all kinds of ways too. I don't think there's anyone who doesn't know about it." In order to better understand the uses and influences of the snapshots on practices in the district, we began to systematically collect information in the winter of 2002 and spring of 2003, the first year of the snapshot's implementation.

In this section of the paper, we trace some of the ripples that the snapshot system has made in the district's pond. Many of these themes emerged only after we had interviewed both data collectors and principals whose schools were visited. First we discuss how the snapshots have provided a picture of the extent to which the key district reforms have been implemented within

schools and classrooms. Second, we consider ways in which the snapshots have more fully articulated a picture of implementation of district reforms to principals and school faculties. Third, we examine how the snapshots have signaled district priorities to school leaders and faculties. Fourth, we examine individuals' feelings of accountability associated with a system that was designed as a district-level accountability device. Fifth, we discuss the ways that the snapshot has become a mechanism for non-traditional professional development for the snapshot data collectors. Sixth, we examine how the snapshot experiences have created a mechanism for the cross-pollination of ideas across the district. Seventh, we discuss ways in which the snapshot system has become a catalyst for creative local uses of the snapshot concept. Finally, we discuss some of the important challenges and trade-offs that have arisen during the snapshot development process. The paper concludes with a brief discussion of the implications of building formal systems for monitoring instructional improvement reform in educational organizations.

Providing a Picture of Implementation of Key District Reforms

Most directly, the snapshot results provide a picture at a particular point in time of what implementation of a specific element of the district's standards-based reform looks like. The results of individual school snapshots, focused on a particular element of the district's Framework for the Implementation of Standards, are entered on a secure website and are then aggregated to form a picture of district-wide implementation. The results are then reproduced for analysis and discussion by district leaders and for dissemination and discussion at the following month's district-wide principals' meeting (see Appendix C for an example of results).

Comments from district administrators and principals suggest that the snapshot results are focusing attention on implementation of the district's reform efforts. As one district administrator said, "I think it is forcing us to take a look. We have been talking about standards. Okay, now here is an opportunity to actually take a look at it and determine where we are on this road towards standards."

District leaders also report that the snapshot results give them a better understanding of the extent to which the district's reform ideas are being practiced in schools and classrooms. Initial snapshots revealed, for example, that the implementation of some reform efforts has not taken place to the degree that district leaders would like. "We talk about standards, safety nets, and student work all the time, but I am always a little surprised to learn how superficially they are understood and used in some schools," said one regional superintendent. Principals also reported that they found the snapshot results to be useful for gaining a clearer picture of the level of implementation in their own schools. On our spring 2003 survey, for example, 84% of the principals agreed or strongly agreed that the snapshot system has provided the district with valuable information about the implementation of standards.

Respondents also noted the shift of emphasis towards implementation, as opposed to the final impact of programs. "[The superintendent] is trying to find something that will give him an idea how we are implementing the standards-based design," one principal said about the snapshot system. Another district administrator highlighted the value of the intermediary data provided by the snapshot results. "We've consistently said that you have to do monitoring to determine how things are going. You don't wait until the end of a grading period to determine that 40% of the ninth graders are going to have failing grades. I think that this reinforces what we have been saying in the district. I think all of our initiatives are tied back into academic performance and how you monitor that and how you take those quick shots of it to determine if are we moving in the right direction or do we need a course correction," he explained. By focusing on implementation, the snapshot results give district administrators and school leaders information with which to guide their efforts to deepen implementation of the

district's reform efforts in order to increase the likelihood that these efforts will translate into higher student test performance at the end of the school year.

Articulating Deeper Implementation

A reform vision provides a crucial articulation of the direction in which an organization seeks to head. Yet a vision is rarely specified enough to provide members of the organization with clear direction (Gillen, 2000). Louis and Miles (1990) argue that vision emerges from collective reflection on action, rather than from mere vision statements. The snapshots have provided a deepening understanding of the key components of the district's reforms. For example, one snapshot data collector, a middle school principal, talked about how the snapshots have helped her to distinguish between the different levels of understanding that students have about standards. She also realized that teachers may not be adequately helping students to make connections between their work and expectations for their work, as evidenced in the standards.

> It [a snapshot visit] has alerted me to how a lot of teachers will put the standard up there, but the kids have no idea the standard's there or what it means or that the lesson is tied to it. I guess I should have known that, but it made me see that now. I ask my kids when I walk into the class, "Hey, do you have a clue what standard you're working on?" Amazingly, they don't. Some of the things that I noticed when I was in this school, the kid would say "Yeah, we're working on that standard over there that the green finger is pointing to." They couldn't tell me what the standard actually said or what it was about. They just knew that they were working to the one that the green finger was pointing on, because their teacher always moved the green pointer to the standard they were working on. So they really didn't have any substantial understanding.

The development of the snapshot rubrics provided crucial articulation of different degrees of implementation and provided teachers and school leaders with more concrete specificity as to what different levels of implementation of the district's reform vision looked like. Principals overwhelmingly indicated that the snapshot rubrics have provided greater specification of the district's instructional vision. On the spring 2003 survey, 41% of principals strongly agreed and 49% somewhat agreed with the statement "The snapshot rubrics have helped me to better understand what to focus on in order to implement standards-based reform."

In interviews, the district administrators in charge of regions within the district talked about how they used the snapshot rubrics for discussions with principals and how they provided greater specificity for principals to guide them in their implementation. "I can see me using it for discussions with principals, too, and for collaboration," said one regional director. "I think it certainly lays it out for principals," said a regional superintendent.

> They determine where they are, but through the rubric, they can see where they need to go, and so can the teachers, and so can I and the district, so that we can see what else needs to be happening to help them to get to all the way over there to In Place. We know it's going to take a while; it's not going to happen in a year or two. But it gives them a road map, and I think this is something principals had really wanted—what are the expectations.

One of the key determinants to successful change within any large organization is the extent to which the language of the reform is shared across members of the organization (Daft & Huber, 1987). By developing and spreading a particular reform language, district leaders are also giving teachers and school leaders a vocabulary with which to develop a common meaning and deeper understanding of reform. Developing a common vocabulary with which to discuss current and desired practice is a large reform step in itself because it is a foundation for problem-solving interactions.

In our interviews, several snapshot participants described how the snapshots had provided a common language with which to engage each other about the district's reforms. One district administrator, for example, discussed how the snapshots provided a mechanism for spreading what he called a "common platform" across the district. As he explained:

> It certainly now gives a common platform for discussion. For example, the next piece dealing with safety nets. Now we have been talking about safety nets and encouraging schools to do safety nets, but now I think we can take those particular questions (referring to rubrics and evidence forms) as I work with and visit other schools to talk about safety nets. This allows us to have the same kind of dialogue and conversation with principals across our region. I think that's very helpful to me. Now we have the same platform and I'm not on one platform with one principal and on another platform with another.

Particularly given the size of Duval County (149 schools, 7300+ teachers), developing a shared understanding both within and across schools is particularly challenging. And yet, this is what the snapshot process seems to have facilitated.

The snapshot rubrics in particular have created a means of disseminating a common language of the district's reforms across the schools in Duval County. As one district administrator commented:

> The snapshot rubrics have been very helpful just as talking points when I go talk to administrators, principals. And I think they've helped teachers. It's been helpful to teachers as any rubric would… be in learning of what we're looking for. It has given us a common theme, a common goal— don't know if it's a goal —a focus everybody's on…Everybody's got this common focus now.

Signaling District Priorities

School districts are distinctly nested communities, in which school faculties tend to operate largely within their own insulated micro-societies (Orton & Weick, 1990; Weick, 1976). School principals spend most of their time and energy operating within, managing, and responding to the particular issues of their own school communities. Within this din, the snapshot activities act as a reminder to principals and teachers of the larger framework within which they are operating and of the priorities of district leaders. One elementary school principal, for example, talked about the how the snapshot rubric on Understanding and Using Standards kept her school focused on standards. "It kinda keeps it [standards] there at the top of your list. It pushes it back up the list because you see it is still important to the district," she said. Others saw the snapshots as an extension of the superintendent's priorities and his commitment to staying the course and accomplishing the goals he set as priorities. As one principal commented, "One by-product of this is that people know that he is totally serious. It's [district reform efforts] not going away and we're still going to do this and it's going to remain a priority." The snapshots thus were a way for district leaders to penetrate protected school cultures in order to communicate the larger district goals and priorities to school faculties.

Another prevailing theme that emerged from our interviews with principals and administrators was the sense of urgency to implement the district initiatives that was conveyed by the snapshot activities. District leaders were actually examining what teachers and principals were doing and expecting them to be practicing in ways prescribed within the snapshot rubrics. As one middle school principal said about enacting the snapshots, "I think this is one of the most powerful things that he [the superintendent] has done. It is creating a sense of urgency, because people know that they are going to be visited and they want to do their best." An elementary school principal reiterated this theme, "Just knowing that someone else from the district could come into my school and do a snapshot of my faculty and staff has created a sense of urgency. So I feel I like I need make sure that all

my people are prepared. . ." One regional superintendent explained his perception of the effect of the snapshots on principals' attention to standards:

> *I think for the first time, we've got principals that have started paying attention to it [standards]. I think some maybe thought that this too was going to go away. But I think once you start creating a vehicle that is going to be consistent in the monitoring piece, people then respond because they know this is important because it's being monitored; an inspection is taking place. So I now give this a higher priority as to my management attention.*

Thus the snapshots raised the level of awareness of and attention to the district initiatives. The snapshots focused school personnel on the district's standards-based reform initiatives. The snapshots thus signaled the district's priorities to school leaders and faculty members.

Similarly, teachers sometimes have difficulty distinguishing between reforms advocated by their principals and reforms advocated by district leaders. The snapshots lent greater weight to the reforms that principals were advocating and gave them a way to convince their faculty that the reforms were not just local to their schools but were occurring district-wide. As one principal noted, "It is encouraging the teachers to adopt standards if they were borderline or if they were waiting for it to go away. They are seeing concrete evidence that it's real, that it's not just my principal and it's not going to go away too soon." A district leader made a similar point about the value of the district making clear its priorities through the implementation of the snapshot for aiding the work of principals in furthering the work of getting teachers to embrace standards-based instruction. She explained:

> *It [the snapshot] is a very useful tool as a driver to help people adopt it more quickly than what some people would like to. Some people would like to wait until it goes away. But some principals have really struggled*

with how to get their teachers to adopt this, and so when we started giving out the rubrics, then the principal could say it's not just me, this is really here. So it gave the principal a tool to use and it could be used very effectively. . .

Providing Indirect Accountability

The snapshot system is explicitly designed to measure the depth of implementation of the district's initiatives. In this sense it is a *district-level* accountability system, because the unit of interest is the entire district, not individual schools. Schools are data points to form a global analysis. All design elements of the snapshot system reinforce this point. Schools are selected as a group to broadly represent the range of school types (elementary, middle, and high), regions within the county, and state test performance, such that together they represent the swath of the district. Teachers within schools are sampled to represent the range of implementation within the school. Although everyone knows which schools are in each sample, only the snapshot data collectors and the principal of the school know what rating the school received. This anonymity is preserved when the results presented at each monthly principals' meeting. Shared results show the global picture of implementation across the district and individual schools, but individual schools are never identified either publicly or to district administrators.

The identity of the results of individual schools is closely guarded, both publicly and privately. Ever since its introduction, public pronouncements continually reinforce that the results for individual schools will never be identified and that the purpose is to develop a picture of district-wide implementation. The superintendent and the system developers have continually stressed this point at every opportunity. In one famous debriefing session for one of the early sets of snapshot results with the district's instructional cabinet (the superintendent, chief of staff, and five regional superintendents) led by the first author of this

report, the superintendent wanted to know the identity of one of the high-performing outliers in order to honor the school. The first author explained, "Well, I could tell you that but I am not going to, because if I tell you the identity of that school, the next thing you would want to know is who is the lowest performing school and the moment that you identify any schools publicly then the system is going to die from suspicion and mistrust." And so we made a pact that the purpose of the system was to get the big picture of the district and that no individual schools would be identified, even behind closed doors.

But organizational suspicions die hard. Despite the consistent pronouncements to the contrary (although there were cases of gossiping by data collectors in which they revealed their findings to others, thus undermining trust in the confidentiality of individual schools' results), principals still felt that they were being individually held accountable for their performance on the snapshots. In the spring 2003 survey, principals were asked to respond to the statement: "The snapshot results for my school are used by district administrators to make judgments about my individual school's

implementation." Overall, 56% of the principals agreed with this statement! Figure 1 shows the results decomposed by whether or not the principal participated as a snapshot data collector.

Over 60% of the visited principals strongly or somewhat agreed that the snapshot data was being used by district administrators to judge their individual school, despite all the proclamations by district administrators to the contrary. These principals were significantly more likely to believe this than the principals who were snapshot data collectors, of which about a third somewhat or strongly agreed this was the case. Principals who were data collectors were likely less suspicious of district administrators, due to their greater familiarity with the goals and procedures of the snapshot system. But surprisingly, even a third of these principals still suspected that administrators were making judgments about their individual school's implementation, suggesting that the district administration had not adequately dispelled principals' fears of the misuse of the system.

Figure 1. Responses to the statement "The snapshot results for my school are used by district administrators to make judgments about my individual school's implementation."
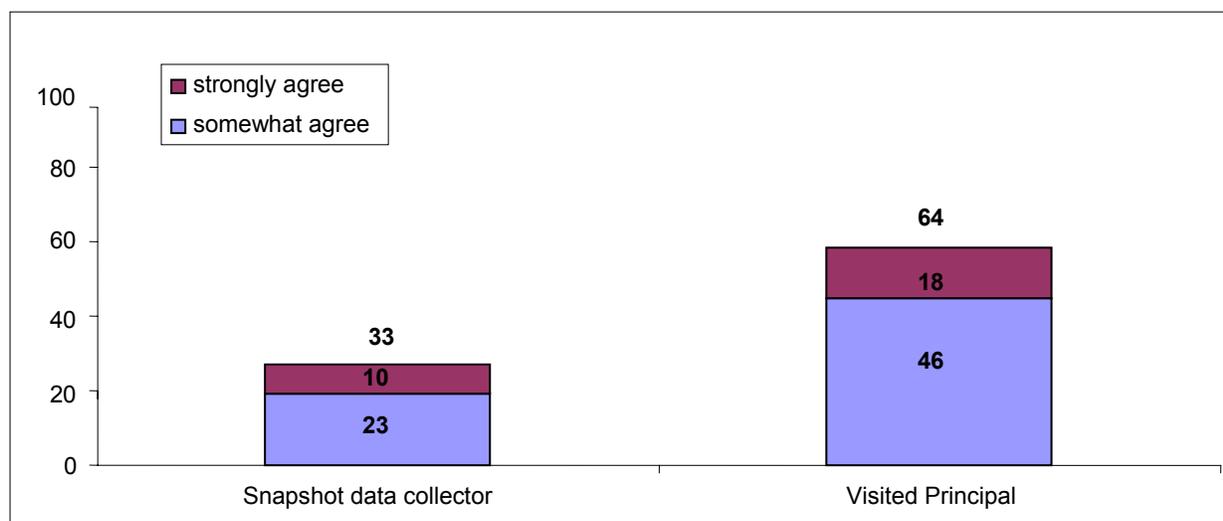
Any system that monitors implementation of reform programs puts pressure on participants and is likely to make them feel accountable for their compliance. The mere presence of the system reminds teachers and principals that these are elements of particular concern to the district. The designers of the snapshot system sought to soften this pressure (and the associated anxiety and resistance) by making the district the unit of accountability and protecting the identity of individual schools. Even so, principals' responses to survey and interview questions revealed their feelings of individual accountability.

Principals also reported that they felt accountable for their school's implementation of the content of the snapshots. On the spring 2003 survey of school principals, 47% strongly agreed, and an additional 40% somewhat agreed to the statement "We are held accountable for our school's implementation of the content of the snapshots." This agreement likely reflects the tight relationship between the snapshot subjects and the emphases of the district's major initiatives. This sense of accountability also probably stems from normative pressures that accompany increased interaction between staff which lays open to public judgment what is going on inside the walls of a school. Professionalism also may likely play some role, as one district administrator pointed out to explain how the snapshot has played a powerful role in generating a sense of urgency and focus around district key district reforms. As the principal explained, "So somebody comes to your school, or somebody may come to your school, all of a sudden . . . you want to do your best for the superintendent and for your kids." This pressure appears to be greater for data collectors, who see themselves in a position as exemplars. This awareness is described by one data collector principal: "And so how can I expect to go and see these things in other schools when I had the benefit of all this training, and I'm not sure I've seen it in mine? I need to make sure that it is happening here. It's a reality check for me."

Supplying Professional Development Opportunities

Adults learn in so many different ways and in so many different situations. However, we tend to see their learning opportunities as limited to formal professional development occasions, as opposed to non-canonical, yet powerful, learning experiences (Brown & Duguid, 1996). One of the surprising things that emerged from our interviews with the snapshot data collectors was the extent to which the entire snapshot experience – from the scrutiny of the snapshot rubrics to the visits to schools with colleagues to the examination of the snapshot results – provided a powerful learning opportunity for those involved.

The training sessions for new rubrics became important professional development opportunities for the snapshot data collectors. In advance of using a rubric new to the district, the data collectors would get together, review the rubrics and evidence forms, break out to practice their application in a small group of 3–4 schools, and then reconvene to compare ratings and discuss how the snapshots went and make suggestions for fine-tuning the rubrics and evidence forms. Many of the data collectors lauded the value of the training sessions and how they deepened their understanding of the snapshot topics. "The training sessions really helped me to understand what the district was trying to get at with its emphasis on standards and student work," said one snapshot data collector, and elementary school principal. "I never thought of this [the snapshots] as professional development, but I found those trainings so much more valuable than the other district training sessions," said a middle school principal.

Cross-school visitations provided valuable learning opportunities for school and district leaders. Not only did they get to share ideas about how to help improve instruction in their schools or regions, but these visits also provided direct observation of different approaches to teaching and learning that served as points of comparison and reflection for generating ideas

on how to improve one's own school. One principal described the impacts of the data collection visits:

> *You can come back to your building after you've done a visitation like that and you learn from that experience, and so okay, I know I need to do this or don't need to do that, or I've not done that very well… But certainly you come back and you do realignments—that's what the process is about. I was glad to I was able to do that, because it helps me make a better assessment in terms of what I need to do with my staff.*

In our debriefing sessions with snapshot data collectors, we frequently heard similar feedback about what a powerful learning experience the visits were for them.

Both the influence of the snapshot experience and its perceived utility was amplified for those principals who were involved in conducting snapshots in comparison to those who just were recipients of the snapshots. Participation in evaluation activities has been shown to amplify the influence of the evaluation, particularly its findings, on the learning of participants. Cousins (1998) examined the impact of an evaluation on the learning of educators at different levels of involvement with the data collection and analysis process. He found "different patterns of influence on organizational learning at different levels within the organization," with those closer to the project demonstrating more learning relative to those who were just consumers of the results of the project (p. 145).

Comparisons of the survey responses indicated that the principals who participated in collecting the snapshot data were more influenced by the snapshot experience. Table 1 shows the responses to survey items of principals who were snapshot data collectors compared to those whose schools were visited, and indicates whether these differences were statistically significant. The principals who were data collectors reported that the different components of the snapshot system (examining the rubrics, the visit itself, and examination of the results) had significantly more influence on themselves

and their faculty than did the tools and experience for the principals who were merely peripheral participants. This is not to say that the visited principals did not report influence from the experience, only that it was more profound for those with a deeper understanding of the system and its purposes. This is one of the reasons that the designers of the system chose to more than double the group of data collectors from 42 in the first year to 86 in the second year, and to a planned 191 participants in the third year.

As district leaders started to regularly examine the snapshot results in their own meetings, they began to see implications for district professional development and sought to more closely align the findings of the snapshots with the sequence of both principal leadership training and teacher training. One district administrator, for example, described how the snapshot results have increased the coherence of the district's training designs. She said that the results give "information for what we need to do as far as training, and I guess the biggest part is our training has not been as cohesive as it needs to be." In the second year of implementation, the district's leadership professional developers began to align the topics of the snapshots with leadership training such that snapshots were conducted one to two months after topics were examined and discussed in professional development. Thus the snapshots acted as follow-up training and implementation for district reform strategies.

The snapshot results also influenced professional development decisions at other levels of the district. A few principals told us that they used the results of the snapshot visits to their schools to guide their within-school professional development decisions. "It [the snapshot system] is also creating or identifying the need for training," an elementary school principal told us. "A number of people haven't adopted [standards] because they need systematic training and assistance in getting there," she said. School coaches also reported that they were examining snapshot results for indications as to further emphases they could make in their training with teachers in their schools.

Table 1. Principal Reports of Influence of the Snapshots on Themselves and Their Faculty

Survey Item	Visited Principals (*n* = 93)		Principals who were Data Collectors (*n* = 33)	
	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
I have disseminated the snapshot rubrics to my faculty *	30	62	7	90
The snapshot visit to my school was useful to my faculty *	53	26	30	53
I have examined the snapshot rubrics for topics other than the one on which my school was visited.*	33	56	9	84
The discussions of the snapshot results at the monthly principal meetings provide me with guidance as to what to focus on in my school.~	52	21	29	42
I regularly share the snapshot results with my faculty.	43	25	38	41

* *p* < .05   ~ *p* < .10
 (* Statistically significant differences between principals who were data collectors and visited principals)

Cross-Pollinating ideas

Another theme that emerged as we examined the data from our interviews was the extent to which the snapshot became a means for the sharing of ideas across the district. The discussions of the snapshot results at the district's monthly principal's meetings was designed to facilitate conversations rather than to simply present results to principals. The district's five regional directors are coached to facilitate an examination of the results with principals in their region in order to collaboratively arrive at conclusions about the meaning of the results and to brainstorm actions based upon their findings. Several respondents noticed the contrast between these conversations and many other meetings. As one principal explained:

We go to meetings . . . I go to meetings with other principals all the time. We are given a lot of information. We sit in meetings and we get a lot of information. Other meetings, we're required to do this and that. There are very few times when we really sit and talk to another professionally about what's

happening in our school and what's working. 'What do you say to teachers who do this?' I think it's really powerful. . . And just hearing another person talk about the words they use in conversations with teachers helps. So that to me has been a powerful part of this. It has given opportunities for administrators to really talk about best practices and what they could do to help their school improve.

A similar sense of dialogue as opposed to dissemination arose in conversations about the debriefing experience between the host principal and snapshot visitors that concluded snapshot visits. One snapshot data collector, a district regional director, said:

I think it is especially valuable to hear conversations between principals from different regions about what they saw and what their understanding was and what their training has been and how they have accomplished things, especially with moving their teachers, because I think really the most difficult part is not the presentation of

information, it's having staff to adopt it, and how do you get that to occur. So it's been helpful to see principals exchange information.

Similarly, a district administrator observed how the snapshots helped to strengthen and validate the professional judgment of participating principals:

Another thing I learned is that when I met with the administrators after the observations, those were very powerful for the principal. I think those meetings give the principals words to say, another way of saying what they already may know, because when another administrator comes in and sees things that this principal has already seen and then says it in a different way. It's so strengthening to the principal to say, "Oh, they see what I see, but they're telling me a way they're seeing it that sounds different from what I've always said."

These debriefing sessions between the data collectors and the principal of the visited schools were a catalyst for professional conversations. One district administrator said:

I noticed there was a lot of talk about best practices between the administrators, what's working what's not working, what I've tried. They get off subject of the snapshot a little bit because they're saying, "Well, how did you get them to do that? What do you say when they say this?" A lot of powerful talk goes on in those that's not really about the snapshot. It creates a moment for more collegial conversations I guess...

The snapshots are designed to bring together principals who are at different developmental levels in a mutually constructive learning and teaching experience. While it is possible for less experienced principals, or principals of schools that have not deeply implemented the district's reform efforts, to be in a position of conducting snapshots in schools with more experience, the design of the snapshots mitigates these situations via several design elements. First, the district

leaders are careful to choose principals to conduct the snapshots who are generally considered strong leaders. Further, data collectors visit schools in teams of two or three (depending on the school's size), which reduces the possibility that the entire snapshot judgment will be made by a single individual (and increases the opportunities for learning). Finally, when putting together the teams for each visit, the assigners of the snapshot teams are careful to distribute knowledge and experience.

Principals reported that they learned from their peers with deeper experience. One regional director explained, "The most positive thing that happened was they have connected with a school that has two or three more years of training, and they will visit and do some working together. So I think it was a very positive thing to connect one school with the other for them to support and help each other." An elementary school principal saw the experience of visiting another school as tremendously beneficial in terms of gathering new ideas. The principal explained:

Just using the information that I see at other schools and bringing it back and incorporating it, I was able to talk with the principal there about how much further along I feel that her school is than this school, and maybe just get some ideas like her training about standards, how she did follow-ups in the classroom, and what observation tools she uses with her teachers when she goes in there to give them vital feedback on how they're progressing.

Principals also used their visits to compare their schools with other schools. As one high school principal said:

So that's [data collection visits] made me better, better prepared, as I said. I hate to use the word compare, but I certainly can come back and see where we are compared to somebody else. When I went to the first school and the training and I watched that unfold, I felt that I had a lot of work to do at my school, because they seemed to be a lot further along than we were. But then when I came back and had my debrief with the

snapshot people, then I feel like, maybe we're not as bad as I thought; you know sometimes you're too critical of oneself. But then I went to the snapshot visit myself and came back, then I thought maybe we're further along than they are. You can't help but compare; it's just in the process of what we do, and I think that's okay.

Spawning a Variety of Local Uses

One testimonial to the utility of both the snapshot concept and the tools created by the snapshot developers is the variety of ways that the snapshots are being modified and used at different levels of the organization. Principals and district leaders reported that they have found ways to take the snapshot rubrics and the systematic nature of data collection inherent in the snapshots and apply these concepts to other circumstances.

Across the district, for example, principals described how they are using the snapshot rubrics in their classroom observations. "Its helped me with my own school because I'm actually looking with greater depth when I get into classrooms and giving the teachers feedback based on that," one of the snapshot data collectors told us. Another principal who we interviewed, not one of the snapshot data collectors, indicated that she had also integrated the snapshot rubric into her observations. She said:

> *I have taken the rubric and I've incorporated that into an observation form, so I'm looking at the same things in the classrooms as the snapshot visitors. I make my recordings on that classroom observation form and leave a copy with the teacher so that they have feedback from me, so that I'm looking for the same things that the district thinks is important to look at.*

Principals were also using the rubrics with their staff as the basis for conversations about implementation and improving the effectiveness of district reform policies within their own schools. "I recently used the safety nets rubric in a faculty meeting so that we could discuss and improve the way we were providing safety net support to our students," said one elementary school principal. These conversations between principals and teachers are essential for ensuring deeper understanding and implementation of district reform efforts, and the snapshot has clearly been a catalyst in encouraging them. Another principal further confirmed this point when he noted that "As I said, we talked about the snapshot visit, we sat and we had a meeting, and we debriefed, and they're talking the rubric and the standards . . . and I got some feedback from them. Not doing the snapshot, I wouldn't have gotten that information."

Principals were also interested in taking advantage of the expertise of the snapshot data collectors. Several of the snapshot data collectors have been asked to visit other schools to conduct informal assessments based on the snapshot rubrics. As one of the data collectors explained:

> *People have called me and asked me to come and visit their school, even when they know they weren't chosen. They just want to know what it looks like, you know, how are we doing? Do you have some advice for us? What should be our next step in implementation?*

This suggests that schools are eager to implement the district's reforms, but are uncertain about their own levels of implementation and are seeking guidance as to how to move forward.

In another interesting offshoot, principals are including the snapshot rubrics into their self-constructed performance evaluation system, called Appraisal Plus, which requires them to identify their own performance goals and measure their success at achieving those goals. One of the regional superintendents we interviewed reported that more than a third of the principals in his region were using the snapshots as one measure of teacher progress within their school. He explained, "They just saw this as a tool that was already developed. . .

It already has some credibility. You know, it has the district's stamp of approval, and all these principals have already gone out and used it."

Challenges

The introduction and ongoing use of snapshots has also raised a series of challenges for the snapshot developers. Here we discuss some of the key challenges that both designers and participants have pointed out. These include rubric development, which necessitated reaching consensus on greater detail of what implementation meant; maintaining the integrity of the system as the pool of data collectors expanded; and capturing the learning provided by the snapshots.

One of the hardest challenges is developing the rubrics that are to be used in the snapshots. The rubrics are so important because they are the embodiments of the district's definitions of high-quality implementation and specify the stages that teachers and schools go through in deepening their implementation of the district's vision of standards-based instruction. In the first year of the snapshot development, there was one group of rubric developers, made up of principals, regional directors, and technical assistors who developed the rubrics, regardless of topic. The rubrics were then vetted by larger circles of school and district leaders. This process was sufficient for the topics of the first year, which were: Understanding and Using Standards, Connecting Student Work to Standards, and Safety Nets.

In the second year, the snapshot topics became more ambitious. Data-Driven Decision Making, Connecting Reading Instruction to Standards, and Connecting Mathematics Instruction to Standards were added as areas for snapshot inquiries. These rubrics proved to be more difficult to develop and attain consensus agreement on their contents. The development teams became more specialized, bringing in content experts in these areas, and the review periods became longer as the development teams received iterative feedback and refined the instruments. Training the snapshot data

collectors also became more involved, as the requirements for expertise in order to make the judgments required of the snapshots became greater.

Particularly in the second year, as the teams delved deeper into the thickets of specifying instructional implementation, the rubric development process led to serious, and sometimes heated, debates about different conceptions of quality implementation. These differences were long standing across the district, and had led to different applications across the district, but nothing had heretofore forced them to the surface. Not surprisingly, the more specified the rubrics were, the more contentious the conversation became because we were rubbing up more closely against deeply held beliefs about what was the "right" way to teach. When the rubrics were more general (e.g., Understanding and Using Standards), it was easier to reach agreement because agreement is easier for more general ideas. The explicitness and publicness of the rubrics, which are essentially codifying the expectations of the district, are helping to bring out the different conceptions of various stakeholders. This has led to important conversations about what is meant, for example, by reading across the curriculum, professional learning community, and preventative safety nets for at-risk students. The more in advance the rubrics are developed, the more opportunity they have to be critiqued by people from across the system, the more iterations of refinement they go through, the more credible they become and the more deeply articulated and widely shared will be the district's vision for instructional quality.

Another major challenge that the development teams faced was the extent to which the rubrics should specify the desired state of instructional quality, as opposed to moving the current state of quality forward. The deeper the teams got into the rubric development process, the more they realized that they were specifying steps along the path that they hoped schools and teachers would go down—and there is a lot of value to articulating what schools should strive towards. But they also realized that they ran the risk of getting out too far ahead of both where the

district currently was and what the data collectors could reasonably assess. In one training session on the rubric for Connecting Student Work to Standards in Reading, a high school principal commented, "You don't even need to go out and do a snapshot on this rubric. I can tell you before you start that my school is at the Preparing Stage." Other principals readily concurred. They were pointing out that the rubrics were way out ahead of where they currently were.

Another challenge that the developers faced was how to maintain reliability as the number of data collectors expanded from year to year. In the first year of the snapshot, when there were 42 data collectors, the project succeeded in maintaining a fair level of reliability and validity. On the spring 2003 survey of all the principals in the district, 84% of the principals agreed that the snapshot data collectors were qualified to assess implementation of standards in their school (45% strongly agreeing and 39% somewhat agreeing). Over three quarters felt that the snapshot completed of their school was a fair assessment of their implementation of that aspect of standards-based reform (45% strongly agreeing and 33% somewhat agreeing).

In the second year, the data collectors expanded to 86, and the problems of maintaining rigorous and disciplined visits expanded as well. This was compounded by the increasing sophistication of the snapshot rubrics, which consequently required raters with higher skill levels. In the second year, training activities became more involved, with vetting of rubrics and practice snapshot visits to three to four schools. As the district planned to add assistant principals, vice principals and coaches to the snapshot teams for the 2004–2005 school year, assuring inter-rater reliability became a more pressing issue.

Finally, it has become increasingly clear that the snapshots can become a way to foster organizational learning within the district. Yet within these opportunities resides a series of challenges. First, within an organization that is more used to disseminating information than fostering conversation to build shared meaning,

the opportunities for school and district leaders to puzzle through the meaning of the snapshot results are often scarce and underutilized. Second, it is an ongoing struggle to capture the rich comments, insights, and learnings that do come from discussion of the snapshot results, codify them, and disseminate them to those that could capitalize on these insights. Thus both the opportunities to squeeze meaning from the results of the snapshots and the mechanisms to feed these findings back into the system are underdeveloped.

Discussion

The monitoring of instructional reform initiatives is a powerful, but relatively untapped, way of distributing common understandings of practice throughout large systems. Duval County's experience with the snapshot system demonstrates how systems designed to measure the implementation of a district's instructional reform initiative can not only provide insight into the depth of implementation of reform initiatives, but help to shape that meaning and become powerful organizational learning tools. The utility of any instructional implementation monitoring system is predicated on a system-wide vision of instruction, which can be reasonably expected to exist in classrooms and schools across an educational system.

Design elements of any instructional monitoring system must be carefully considered, because they will determine the reliability and validity of the data that are produced, the learning opportunities embedded within the system, and therefore the credibility and ultimate survival of the system itself. In this case, key design issues of the snapshot system included the careful selection and alignment of the snapshot topics, the selection of data collectors as broadly representing leadership of the system, the careful training of the snapshot data collectors, the iterative development process of the snapshot rubrics and evidence forms, the decision to provide results aggregated to the district level, and the opportunities to discuss the snapshot results.

As the reflections of participants in this system show, collaborative implementation monitoring systems can become powerful organizational learning tools. Systems in which leaders from across an educational system participate in the construction of instruments, receive training, collect the data itself, and mull over the results can deepen the buy-in and understanding of a district's reform vision, facilitating deeper implementation. Thus a system designed to monitor implementation may contribute to the deepening of the implementation it is intended to capture. The snapshots have become an important data element in Duval County superintendent John Fryer's dashboard. He is no longer flying blind.

References

Argyris, C., & Schön, D. (1974). *Theory in practice*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Argyris, C., & Schön, D. (1978) *Organizational learning: A theory of action perspective*. Reading, MA: Addison Wesley.

Brown, J., & Duguid, P. (1991). Organizational learning and communities-of-practice: Toward a unified view of working, learning, and innovation. *Organization Science, 2*(1), 40–57.

Caroll, S. (2000). Implementing strategic plans through formalized goal setting. In P. C. Flood, S. Caroll, T. Dromgoole, & L. Gorman (Eds.), *Managing strategy implementation* (pp. 31-43). Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Cousins, B. (1998). Organizational consequences of participatory evaluation: School district case study. In K. Leithwood & K. Seashore Louis (Eds.), *Organizational learning in schools* (pp. 127–142). Lisse, Netherlands: Swets & Zeitlinger.

Daft, R. and Huber, G. (1987): How organizations learn: A communication framework. *Research in the Sociology of Organizations*, 5, 1–36.

Elmore, R. I. (1993). The role of local school districts in instructional improvement. In S. Fuhrman (Ed.), *Designing coherent educational policy: Improving the system* (pp. 96–124). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Floden, R., Porter, A. C., Alford, L. M., Freeman, D. T., Irwin, S., Schmidt, W. H., et al. (1988). Instructional leadership at the district level: A closer look at autonomy and control. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 24*(2), 96–124.

Fullan, M. (1993). *Change forces: Probing the depths of educational reform*. London: Falmer Press.

Fullan, M. (2001). *Leading in a culture of change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Fullan, M., Bertani, A., & Quinn, J. (2004). New lessons for districtwide reform. *Educational Leadership, 61*(7), 42–43.

Gillen, D. (2000). The leadership of learning: The core process of strategy implementation. In P. C. Flood, S. Caroll, T. Dromgoole, & L. Gorman (Eds.), *Managing strategy implementation* (pp. 138-151). Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Kaplan, R. & Norton, D. (1996). *The balanced scorecard: Translating strategy into action*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Koteen, J. (1989). *Strategic management in public and nonprofit organizations: Thinking and acting strategically on public concerns*. New York: Praeger.

Leithwood, K., & Aitken, R. (1995). *Making schools smarter: A system for monitoring school and district progress*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Lortie, D. (1975). *Schoolteacher: A sociological study*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Louis, K., & Miles, M. (1990). *Improving the urban high school: What works and why*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Meyer, J. W., & Rowan, B. (1978). The structure of educational organizations. In M. W. Meyer (Ed.), *Environments and Organizations* (pp. 78–109). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Orton, J. D., & Weick, K. E. (1990). Loosely coupled systems: A reconceptualization. *Academy of Management Review, 15*(2), 203–223.

Supovitz, J., & Snyder, B. (2003). *The impact of standards-based reform in Duval County, Florida, 1999–2002*. Philadelphia: Consortium for Policy Research in Education.

Supovitz, J., & Klein, V. (2002). *Mapping a course for improved student learning: How innovative schools systematically use student performance data to guide improvement*. Philadelphia: Consortium for Policy Research in Education.

Weick, K. E. (1976). Educational organizations as loosely coupled systems. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 21,* 1–19.

Wheelen, T., & Hunger, H. (1983). *Strategic management and business policy*. Reading, MA: Addison Wesley.

Appendix A – Sample Rubric and Evidence Form

Standards Implementation Snapshot System

A system for tracking the implementation of Standards in Duval County

Rubric: Safety Nets

Target 2 of the Duval County Framework for Implementation of Standards asks principals and teachers to provide safety nets for all students. This rubric describes different levels of implementation of the safety net component of the target.

Host Principal Rating:

1. Preparing	2. Getting Started	3. Moving Along	4. In Place
❑	❑	❑	❑

Your ratings (Mark all that apply, and then assess the overall phase of implementation):

Preparing	Getting Started	Moving Along	In Place
❑ Principal analyzes last year's assessment data and/or beginning of the year baseline assessment data to identify and place students in need of remediation. ❑ School-wide action plan identifying specific students, previous interventions, and potential new safety net services is developed. ❑ School has some programs for students who need extra time/ instruction to meet standards, but options are limited. ❑ Few classroom teachers have identified at-risk students in their classes and have a plan for moving the students up to standard.	❑ Leadership team analyzes last year's assessment data and/or beginning of the year baseline assessments to identify and place students in need of remediation. ❑ Leadership team reviews existing programs (i.e. before school, after school, Saturday, course recovery, team-up, mentoring, tutoring, other remediation) to see if data, identified students, and safety nets are aligned. ❑ Some classroom teachers have identified at-risk students in their classes and have a plan for moving the students up to standard. ❑ Remediation sessions are focused to provide intense instruction to move students closer to standards. ❑ School leaders are regularly monitoring student progress. ❑ Safety nets are organized, scheduled, and focused on critical areas for improvement	❑ Leadership team, as well as teacher teams of various configurations, regularly analyzes student performance data. ❑ Teachers are provided with training specifically on how to support at-risk students. ❑ School provides a variety of programs for students to meet standards (i.e. before school, after school, Saturday, course recovery, team-up, mentoring, tutoring, other remediation). ❑ Most classroom teachers can identify at-risk students in their classes and have a plan for moving the students up to standard. ❑ Most instructors of safety net courses have appropriate content expertise. ❑ There is a formalized communication system between safety net teachers and students' regular classroom teachers. ❑ Teachers are provided with quarterly updated data on all students.	❑ Leadership team, as well as teacher teams of various configurations, regularly analyzes a variety of student performance data and adjust safety net programs accordingly. ❑ Student progress is monitored and assessed throughout safety net implementation. ❑ All instructors of safety net courses have appropriate content expertise. ❑ Teacher teams regularly meet to discuss progress of at-risk students towards standards. ❑ Students are moved in and out of safety net programs as needed to perform at standard. ❑ All classroom teachers can identify at-risk students in their classes and have a plan for moving the students up to standard. ❑ Safety net programs are reviewed and revised for effectiveness and targets are developed to include in following year's School Improvement Plan.
1. Preparing ❑	2. Getting Started ❑	3. Moving Along ❑	4. In Place ❑

23

Standards Implementation Snapshot System
A system for tracking the implementation of Standards in Duval County

Evidence Form: Safety Nets

Questions for Principal:
1) Please describe the safety net programs at your school?
2) What data do you use to help you identify students who are at-risk and how do you analyze the data?
3) How would you rate your school on the overall rubric (provide rubric)?
4) How do you know when safety net programs are working?
5) What training has been provided to your staff on helping at-risk students meet standards?
6) Who teaches safety net courses and what are their qualifications?

Questions for Leadership Team member:
1) How is your school identifying and helping at-risk students?
2) What is the role of your leadership team in the school's safety net programs?
3) How do you know when safety net programs are working?

Questions for Safety Net Providers:
1) How were you chosen to provide the safety net course? What is your content background in this subject?
2) Do you talk with the students' regular teachers? What do you talk about? How regularly do you talk?

Questions for Teachers:
1) Who are the at-risk students in your class? How do you know when a student needs instructional intervention?
2) What strategies are you using to bring them up to standard?
3) Can you show me an action plan for a struggling student? Please explain it to me.
4) Do you meet with other teachers to discuss at-risk students? With whom? How often? What information do you use? What do you talk about?

Questions for Students whom teacher has identified as at-risk:
1) What standards are the most difficult for you to meet?
2) What would help you to meet the standards?
3) What kind of help are you getting to meet the standards?

Possible school/classroom artifacts:

Examined   Present

❑   ❑ Safety net plans in SIP.
❑   ❑ Individual student monitoring forms.
❑   ❑ Safety net schedules.
❑   ❑ Safety net attendance rosters.
❑   ❑ Student action plans.
❑   ❑ Targeted student list with data.

Other Pertinent Information:

Appendix B – Visit Guidelines and Teacher Sampling Form

Safety Nets
Visit Guidelines

INFORMATION FOR YOUR VISIT

1. The visit will begin with a brief interview with the principal (see evidence form) and the picking of a leadership team member and teachers to interview. The snapshot team may choose to split up and conduct interviews individually (resulting in a shorter visit) or to conduct interviews and classroom visits together. During the training session, some groups found it helpful to interview a teacher team during one of their planning periods. Be opportunistic to interview teachers who have time available during the time of your visit. The number of individuals to talk to depends on the size of the school you are visiting. Use the following guidelines:

Snapshots of small elementary schools (<700 students, 2-member snapshot team) should include the following:

    1 Principal interview
    1 Leadership team member interview
    3 classroom teacher or team interviews, making sure you include one ELA teacher, one mathematics teacher and one science teacher. The ELA and mathematics teachers or teams should be in grades 3 and/or 4. The science teacher should be in grade 5.

Small High schools (<700 students, 2-member snapshot team):

    1 Principal interview
    1 Leadership team member interview
    3 classroom teacher or team interviews, making sure you include one ELA teacher, one mathematics teacher and one science teacher. The ELA and mathematics teachers or teams should be in grades 9 and/or 10. The science teacher should be in grade 10.

Large Elementary schools (>700 students, 3-member snapshot team):

    1 Principal interview
    1 Leadership team member interview
    5 classroom teacher or team interviews, making sure you include at least one ELA teacher, one mathematics teacher and one science teacher. The ELA and mathematics teachers or teams should be in grades 4 and/or 5. The science teacher should be in grade 5.

Large High schools (>700 students, 3-member snapshot team):

    1 Principal interview
    1 Leadership team member interview
    2 Department chairs (1 ELA, 1 Mathematics).
    3 classroom teacher or team interviews, one ELA teacher, one mathematics teacher and one science teacher. The ELA and mathematics teachers or teams should be in grades 9 and/or 10. The science teacher should be in grade 10.

2. You may want to use the table on the following page to help you select the sample of classrooms to visit.

3. Complete interviews of administrators and teachers/teacher teams, using specified questions from the evidence forms.

4. Meet with your fellow snapshot data collectors and complete rubric, using evidence from your interviews.

5. Debrief with principal (see guidelines on last page of this document).

6. One member of your snapshot team should go to the website and enter the ratings from the observation.

Sampling of Teachers

Use this form when you are picking the classrooms to be visited with the host principal. It may help you to array the possible classrooms to be visited and help you in selecting a representative sample of the school. The host principal should select one classroom and the visiting data collectors should select 3.

- Elementary school classrooms should be in grades 3 and 4.

- Middle school classrooms should be in Language Arts in grades 6 and 7.

- High school classrooms should be in Language Arts in grades 9 and 10.

Grade	Teacher Name	Comments	Selected

Guidelines for Feedback to Principals

After you have conferred with your partner(s), come to agreement on what you observed and complete your rating form.

Have a brief conversation with the host principal. Start by briefly telling them what you saw, what your ratings were, and the evidence that you believe supports the conclusions that you have drawn. *Stick with the facts.* You may wish to go classroom by classroom, or make summary statements across classrooms. Allow them to question your conclusions and provide more information to help explain what you saw (although this should not change your ratings unless you feel that you fundamentally mis-interpreted what you saw).

Remember that you are making sensitive judgments about their school, so please be as constructive as possible. ***Your conversation and your ratings are confidential. Please do not discuss them with anybody after you have completed the observation.***
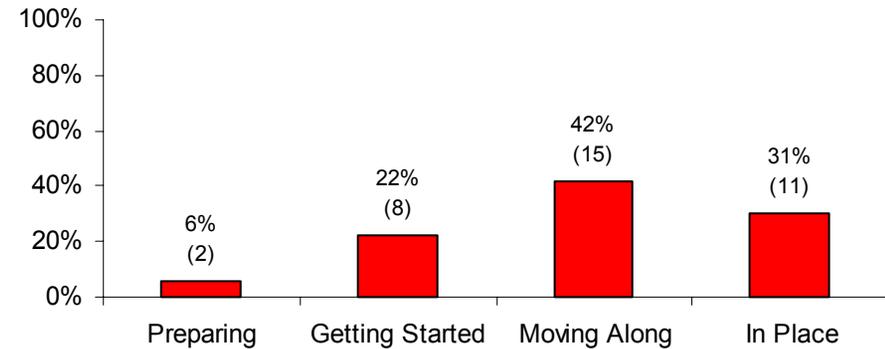
Appendix C – Sample Snapshot Results

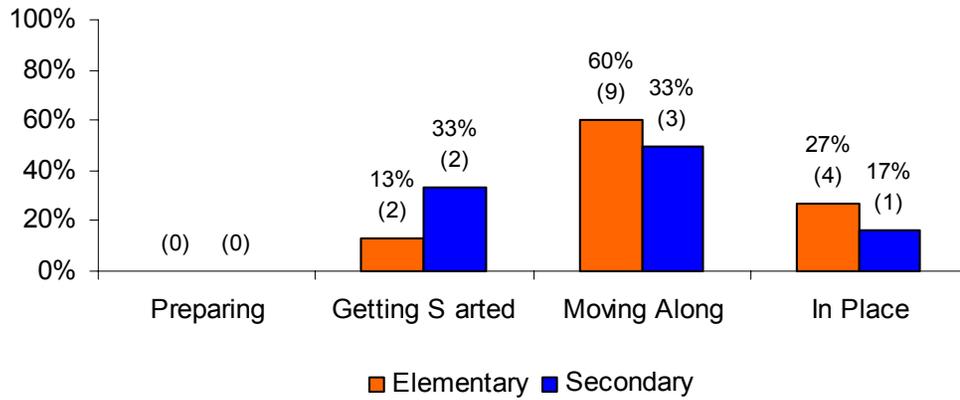## Safety Nets
Overall Ratings

April, 2003
All Schools (*n=21*)
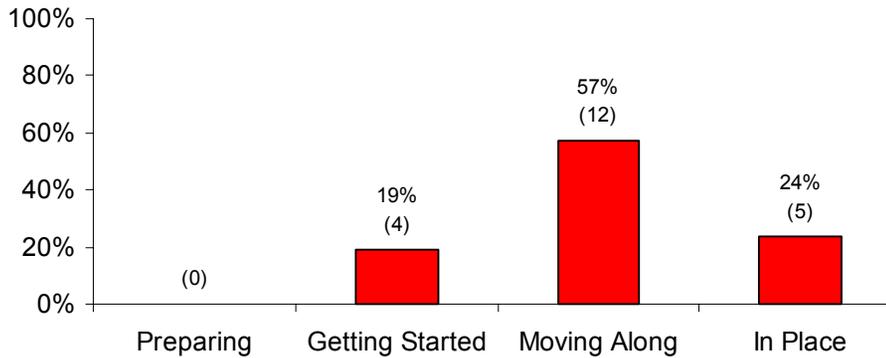
December, 2003
All Schools (*n=36*)

April 2003
Elementary (*n=14*) and Secondary (*n=6*)

Legend: ■ Elementary ■ Secondary

December 2003
Elementary (*n=26*), Middle (*n=6*),
& High Schools (*n=4*)

Legend: ■ Elementary ■ Middle □ High