Welcome, introduce ourselves

Unfortunately, we cannot stay after the session to talk. Originally, we were told our session was happening yesterday and set our travel home based on that. So we have to scamper to Philadelphia right at 10:30 to catch our flights back to Ohio.

Will be happy to answer questions for about 10 minutes directly after our presentation. Also leaving cards so that you can contact us directly.
GETTING STARTED

- Public charter school, 3-year School Improvement Grant (SIG)
- 50 students, multi-level classrooms, small teaching staff
- Families predominantly African-American, economically disadvantaged
- Initial SIG planning began in 2009-2010 with grant
  - Fired original teaching staff, hired new staff for 2010-2011
  - Contracted with external SI provider

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EVALUATION PLANNING

- Brought in early but already late
  - Summer PD completed
  - Onsite PD (learning communities) already up and running
- Started with SIG theory of action and program logic
  - SIG application and documentation
  - Interviews with external SI provider
- This work informed evaluation approach & method

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3 evaluation questions defined in discussion with school and provider about intended learning and accountability needs:
Animation for this slide:

Click 1 – brings up Lack of box
Click 2 – brings up Align boxes
Click 3 – brings up progress box

School and external SI provider developed this as basis for their SIG application and redesign

We developed flow chart to help them visualize what this looked like
Animation:

Click 1: If we do these things
Click 2: Box of 4 SI strategies
Click 3: We can expect; outcomes flow in automatically

They had crossed multiple approaches to point of confusion – SI providers practice model, federal SIG strategies

We cleaned up and provided basic theory of action drawn from federal requirements and their action plan
YEAR 1 EVALUATION FOCUS

- What are the strengths and limitations of ScholARTS SIG strategies and activities as implemented?
- Is the school improvement process being implemented effectively? Specifically,
  - Where is the greatest impact of ScholARTS SIG activities and strategies being seen and/or measured?
  - What are the key barriers to impact?
- What mid-course corrections are called for in implementing ScholARTS SIG strategies and activities?
No animation

Findings for Year 1 – no impact on student measures, many context and process variables that impacted ability to act

Needed to adjust evaluation strategy for Year 2

New questions that incorporated examination of context and process as well as implementation
YEAR 1 LESSONS LEARNED

- Overall implementation did not recognize process
  - What needs to happen when?
  - Interrelationships among SIG elements
- Need to incorporate systems thinking into theory of action
  - To assess critical process and context variables
  - To examine deep structures, organizational assumptions, and patterns
Animation:

Click 1: Provide box
Click 2: arrows
Click 3: dark green boxes
Click 4: arrow to orange box
Click 5: orange box and dotted line
Click 6: outcomes arrow and improved condition for learning
Click 7: outcome arrows and improved student outcomes

In modeling a theory of action underlying a proposed change strategy, it is important to identify, not only the critical areas for activity that are believed to result in change, but also timing and contingencies related to when activities should occur and how they contribute to intended outcomes. Mid-year data analysis resulted in a recommendation to view the ScholARTS Theory of Action as a path model rather than the static “If-Then” model originally posited (see Figure B-2 below). In this way it is possible to identify how the four core improvement areas relate to each other, the nature of their influence (direct, indirect, mediated) on the intended outcomes, and the importance of ensuring that timing and contingency considerations are taken into account when planning and implementing intended school improvement strategies.
Context of the program
what are the salient characteristics of the context in which ScholARTS and SIG activities function?
how do context factors affect SIG design and implementation outcomes?

Implementation of SIG activities
what progress did ScholARTS make in implementing SIG strategies and activities?
to what extent did ScholARTS implement SIG activities aligned to federal and state SIG guidelines?
to what extent did ScholARTS implement SIG activities as intended in school-based strategic and continuous improvement planning?
what factors facilitated or hindered implementation?

Outcomes resulting from SIG implementation
what changes have occurred in the four SIG strategy areas as a result of SIG implementation?
what changes have occurred in student learning as a result of SIG implementation?
what promising practices or strategies have emerged from SIG implementation that could contribute to sustained improvement following the end of SIG funding?
SIG YEAR 2

- Changes in priority and focus
  - Reduced services of primary external service provider
  - Creation of new roles specifically to address student behavior

- Context variables impacting Year 2
  - A move to yet another new building in another section of city
  - Student turnover related to the move
  - Almost 100% turnover in teaching staff
  - Lack of clarity around authority and reporting
  - Philosophical divide across staff about how to address student discipline

In process, this is what we are seeing right now
ONGOING LEARNING…

- Continually look beyond original theories of action to identify elements that make a difference
- Must address and seek to understand contextual and organizational variables critical to program success to ensure findings useful to client

Take-aways for evaluators when working with small organizations attempting major reform/change
FINAL THOUGHTS

- Evaluators need to be prepared to adapt perspective and method to recognize emergence while still meeting the learning needs of clients as projects unfold in real time
- Questions?