



2015 Minnesota English Language Arts Standards and Multi-Tiered System of Supports Implementation Survey

S E P T E M B E R 2 0 1 5

Overview

This English Language Arts standards and Multi-tiered System of Supports (MTSS) status report provides a picture of state-wide implementation.¹ MTSS refers to a framework that provides schools with an integrated system of high-quality, standards-based instruction and interventions that are matched to students' academic, social-emotional, and behavioral needs. This report was designed to provide a status update on state-wide implementation of MTSS and lessons learned in implementing MTSS over time. This report is intended for all stakeholders to better understand that implementation of the standards and MTSS requires a systemic approach and many years to fully implement.

To date, the survey has been conducted three times, in 2013, 2014, and 2015. After the first year, 2013, the survey was revised for 2014 to define better the implementation stages and make clear the connection between the English Language Arts standards and implementation of MTSS. All public K-12 schools were invited to participate in the survey, a total of 1500. A total of 749 schools in 2014 and 623 schools in 2015 completed the survey.

¹ MTSS and Response to intervention are viewed as similar concepts by the Minnesota Legislature and Department of Education; however, since 2012, education leaders have witnessed a systematic movement away from RtI toward MTSS.

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What is MTSS?

The Minnesota Department of Education is supporting schools and districts that are committed to closing the Achievement Gap through the implementation of a Multi-tiered System of Supports (MTSS).² MTSS refers to a framework that provides schools with an integrated system of high-quality, standards-based instruction and interventions that are matched to students' academic, social-emotional, and behavioral needs.

This school-wide framework relies on tiers of instruction that work together and provide a safety net to prevent student failure. The critical features of the framework include screening, progress monitoring, and data-based decision making around instruction and the movement of students within the system of supports. School leaders and teachers use data, obtained through the framework process, to improve organizational supports improve instruction and make decisions about a student who is at risk of not meeting grade-level expectations. Effective implementation of the framework ensures that all students receive instruction that is evidence-based and leads to proficiency in areas to which it is applied. While a school's

² MTSS and Response to intervention are viewed as similar concepts by the Minnesota Legislature and Department of Education; however, since 2012, education leaders have witnessed a systematic movement away from RtI toward MTSS.

MTSS framework should address all academic areas, the purpose of this survey was to focus on MTSS implementation in the Minnesota English Language Arts Standards.

What does the survey measure?

The survey was designed to examine the school-wide implementation of the core features of MTSS as applied in the context of the Minnesota English Language Arts standards. The survey measures leadership supports as well as implementation across core instruction, also known as Tier 1 as well as supplemental and intensive levels of intervention (Tier 2 and 3.) The following illustrates the variables measured in each category.

1. ***Leadership to support the implementation of ELA standards and MTSS*** (cluster score). Effective leadership is essential to the development and continuing improvement of any organization. The leadership survey items are designed to represent different levels of action that leadership teams provide during an implementation effort (to see how leadership items are divided into the four subscales see Appendix A).

A) Leadership commits to holding sustained attention and guiding commitment from the staff (Commitment sub-scale).

B) Leadership ensures that each school has financial, material and programmatic resources adequate to provide each student an equitable opportunity to learn and achieve success (Infrastructure Supports subscale).

C) Leadership communicates expectations and holds staff accountable by using data to make decisions and continuously challenging all students with a rigorous, culturally relevant curriculum (Data-based decision subscale).

D) Leadership reviews and analyze the efficiency and effectiveness of curriculum, instruction, assessment, and professional development on student performance and makes systematic improvements (Systematic improvement subscale).

2. ***Core Instruction also known as Tier1*** (cluster score). Core instruction must meet the needs of all students and lead all students to make progress and achieve proficiency in the state standards. The survey items are designed to represent the presence and infrastructure supports that must be in place for core instruction to fulfill its mission.

A) Standards-based curricula and instruction that is articulated, well understood by all with responsibility for teaching and reinforcing the learning, designed and delivered at the appropriate level of depth and rigor, grounded in culturally responsive practices, Universally Designed and differentiated based on student needs (Curriculum and Instruction subscale).

B) A system of assessments is used to inform instruction and programmatic improvements that include multiple measures useful for determining how students are responding to core curriculum and instruction. Included in this section are also

questions on training for accurate administration and interpretation, data systems that support timely access and communication of results (Assessment subscale).

C) Time for staff with different specialties to collaborate on interpretation of data, design instruction, and problem solve is protected and sufficient (Collaboration subscale)

D) A processes of inquiry and procedures for using data to increase the academic and behavioral success of students in core instruction (Data-based decision subscale).

3. **Supplemental and Intensive Intervention are also known as Tier 2 and 3 supports** (cluster score). Supplemental and intensive intervention must be designed to support students in closing gaps in understanding and achievement. The critical features measured in the survey include:

A) Interventions are evidence-based, matched to student needs aligned with standards and effective for students receiving them (Interventions subscale).

B) A system is in place and consistently used to review student progress (Assessment subscale),

C) Time for staff with different specialties to collaborate in problem solving is established to and protected to support efficient and effective implementation and communication (Collaboration subscale).

D) Defined procedures for problem solving and decision making are known and consistently implemented. (Data-based decision subscale).

English Language Arts Standards Implementation (cluster score). Implementation of the standards is cyclical and the process that follows a sequence from understanding to aligning curriculum, assessments, and instructional practices to making iterative improvements using student performance data. All the steps in the process are articulated in the Mapping the Journey section of the Minnesota ELA Standards Implementation Toolkit. Survey items follow steps in this process,

A) Staff have a common understanding of what the standards are, the depth and rigor required as well as access to a curriculum scope and sequence that makes it possible cover all the benchmarks in a grade (Common understanding subscale).

B) Staff can put understandings into practice and review student progress (In practice subscale).

C) Staff are gathering and using data to make improvements (Continuous improvement subscale).

How are items rated?

School principals were strongly encouraged to have the team responsible for supporting MTSS involved in rating the survey as a team. Teams rated items along a continuum measuring the depth of implementation. The definitions of each rating are below.

Not in place: No action is occurring in this area. This item is not a priority at this time.

Exploring: At this stage, the school spends time identifying needs and exploring: increasing knowledge, building awareness, communicating intentions or developing plans. A representative may attend training with the express purpose of bringing information back.

Installing infrastructure: At this stage, the school acquires data systems, assessments, and/or trains staff on selected practices. *Students are not yet receiving the benefits of what teachers have been trained to do.*

Partial implementation: At this stage, a few or some staff are implementing their training and making use of the infrastructure supports on a daily basis. *Some but not all* the practices and processes are being used school-wide. Partial implementation applies to use of the practices consistently *with a few grade levels when the intention is for all staff to use them.*

Full implementation: At this stage, the school has successfully moved to deepening understanding and refining *use of data and practices*; implementation of practices and use of data has become *ingrained as a way of being for staff*. Leadership continues to plan training and coaching to prevent erosion and promote sustainable implementation. Accountability and monitoring fidelity of practices are a norm.

Who responded to the survey?

Respondents to the survey most frequently included the school principal, academic dean or dean of students, Rtl coach, reading specialist, general and special education teachers, school psychologists and school counselors. The majority of survey responses were completed by a single person, 419 by principals as compared to 159 by a team. Principals tended to rate their implementation at lower levels than teams completing the survey.

Percentage of schools responding to the survey

Grade Level	2013 SURVEY		2014 SURVEY		2015 SURVEY	
	Percentage	# schools	Percentage	# schools	Percentage	# schools
Elementary/K-12	54 %	382	55%	426	56%	349
Middle School	11%	78	13%	100	13%	78
High School	23%	161	20%	155	22%	134
Charter (all grades)	12 %	88	12%	91	10%	62
Total		709		749		623

Note: The 2013 survey was revised for 2014 to define better the implementation stages and to add items about the English Language Arts standards implementation. Therefore, comparison to 2013 is not appropriate. The 2014 and 2015 surveys have the same items. Totals may add up to more than 100 percent due to rounding.

Summary of the 2014 and 2015 survey results

There were over 1500 schools invited to participate in the MTSS survey in 2014 and 2015. A total of 749 schools in 2014 and 623 schools in 2015 completed the survey. This section focuses on results from each year. The following table shows the percentage of responders who reported their school teams were at full implementation.

	Full Implementation in 2014 (749 responses)	Full Implementation in 2015 (623 Responses)
Overall	18%	20%
	Cluster Scores	Cluster Scores
Leadership	20%	21%
Core Instruction	18%	19%
Supplemental and Intensive Intervention	20%	23%
English Language Arts	12%	16%

Reporting implementation by year provides only a partial picture of what is happening across the state. Below we provide some critical findings by year.

In 2014 critical findings included:

- The picture of implementation capacity changes across time, grade, region, district and school levels.
- Elementary schools responded in greater numbers and with more advanced implementation than middle and high schools.
- Implementation of the Minnesota ELA standards is lower than expected given the adoption timelines and expectation that all schools in Minnesota would have them fully implemented by the 2012-2013 school year after becoming law.
- High rates of turnover impacts progress in implementation, changes in budgets, staffing knowledge of evidence-based practices, and infrastructure supports. In 2014 the rate of turnover of principals was 33 percent across all survey responders.

In 2015 critical findings include;

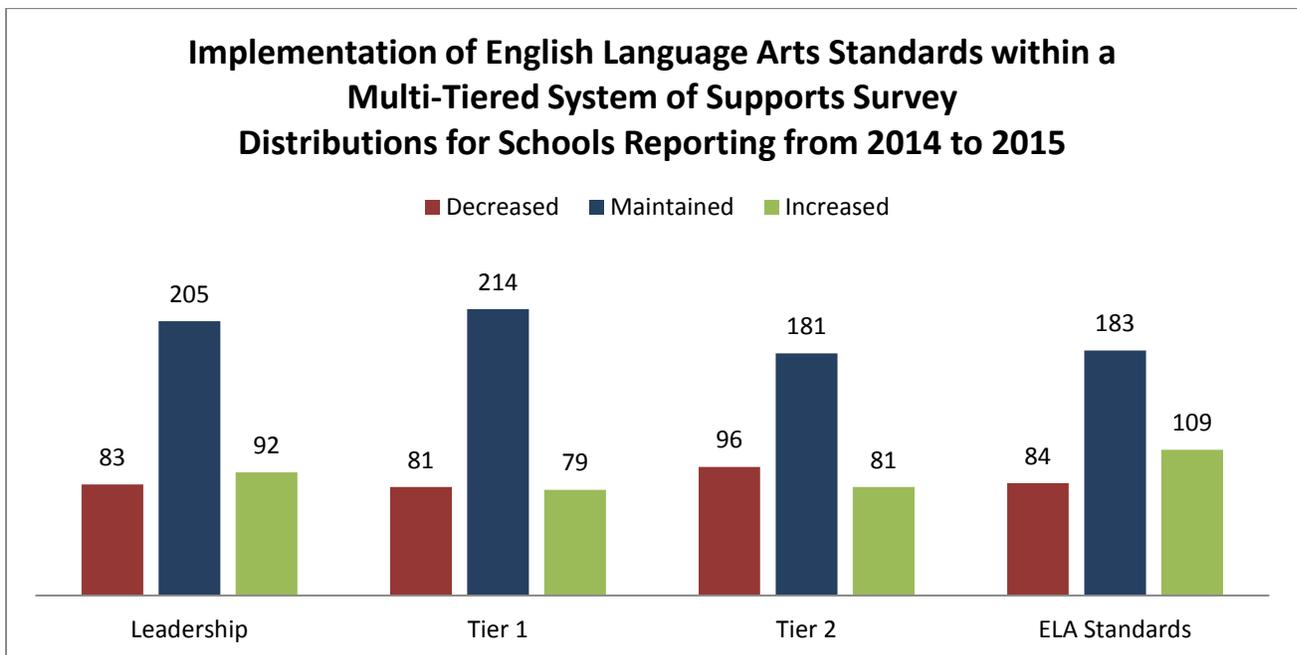
- High rates of turnover continued in 2015 the rate of turnover of principals was 39 percent across all survey responders. Of the 582 responses 42 percent reported changes in principal, 24 percent changed general education teachers and nearly 20 percent reported changes in either the data or curriculum leaders.
- Survey results show that more schools have committed to the effort than have reached the point of using data to make continuous improvements to their practices and infrastructure to sustain implementation of the standards and MTSS with fidelity. Limited use of data in decision making and measurements of fidelity jeopardize the integrity of schools implementing MTSS.
- Analyses of schools that completed the survey for more than one year indicate that implementation is not linear and moving in one direction. Based on the ratings provided between 2014 and 2015, the growth in implementation capacity is counterbalanced in with decreases in implementation. The hypothesis of high turnover and lack of infrastructure to support (e.g., lower budgets, lack of staff's

knowledge of evidence-based practices and fewer trained staff) might be associated with lack of progress in implementation.

- State-wide implementation of the ELA standards is not likely to be achieved before 2017, the start of the next revision cycle.

To what extent are schools improving implementation of the critical features of ELA standards-based instruction in a Multi-Tiered System of Supports?

To address progress in implementation across time, data analyses focused on schools completing the same survey items for both 2014 and 2015. The following summary data represents 380 schools that completed both the 2014 and 2015 surveys. In the context of statewide implementation, the number of schools represented in the multi-year analysis characterizes about 25 percent of the 1500 schools invited to respond to the survey and approximately 60 percent of the schools that completed the survey the last two years.



Note: Not all of the 380 schools recorded responses for every item, so the reader will note response rates vary across the clusters.

The graph illustrates that schools do not always increase implementation across time. The blue, or middle bars in each cluster indicate the majority of responders maintained the same level of implementation as 2014. Maintaining could mean the school team rated themselves at the same level of implementation for both years: not started, installing, partially implementing, or fully implementing.

The bars to the left and right in each cluster indicate schools rating themselves lower, red bars to the left and higher, green bars to the right. The reader should note clusters where the implementation improvement is outpacing regressed levels of implementation. As will be discussed later, teams may be rating themselves more conservatively as they more about how to implement all the ELA standards and MTSS.

Leadership Capacity to Support Implementation of English Language Arts Standards in a Multi-Tiered System of Supports.

Additional analysis indicates that of the 380 schools responding to all questions in the Leadership cluster in both years, 92 schools (24 percent) reported full implementation in 2014, and 91 schools (24 percent) in 2015. When comparing all of the 380 responders across both years, 54 percent reported staying at the same level of implementation in both years, with 30 percent at the partial implementation for both years (see Appendix B).

Implementation of High-Quality Core Instruction (Tier 1).

Of the 374 schools responding to all questions in the Tier 1 cluster in both years, 84 schools (22 percent) reported full implementation in 2014 and 84 schools (22 percent) in 2015. When comparing all of the 374 responders across both years, 57 percent report sustaining implementation at the level they were the previous year, with 37 percent at the partial implementation for both years (see Appendix B).

Implementation of Supplemental and Intensive Interventions (Tiers 2 and 3)

Of the 358 schools responding to all questions in the Tier 2/3 cluster in both years, 86 schools (24 percent) reported full implementation in 2014 and 85 schools (24 percent) in 2015. When comparing all of the 358 responders across both years, 51 percent report sustaining implementation at the level they were the previous year, with 27 percent at the partial implementation for both years (see Appendix B).

Implementation of the English Language Arts Standards

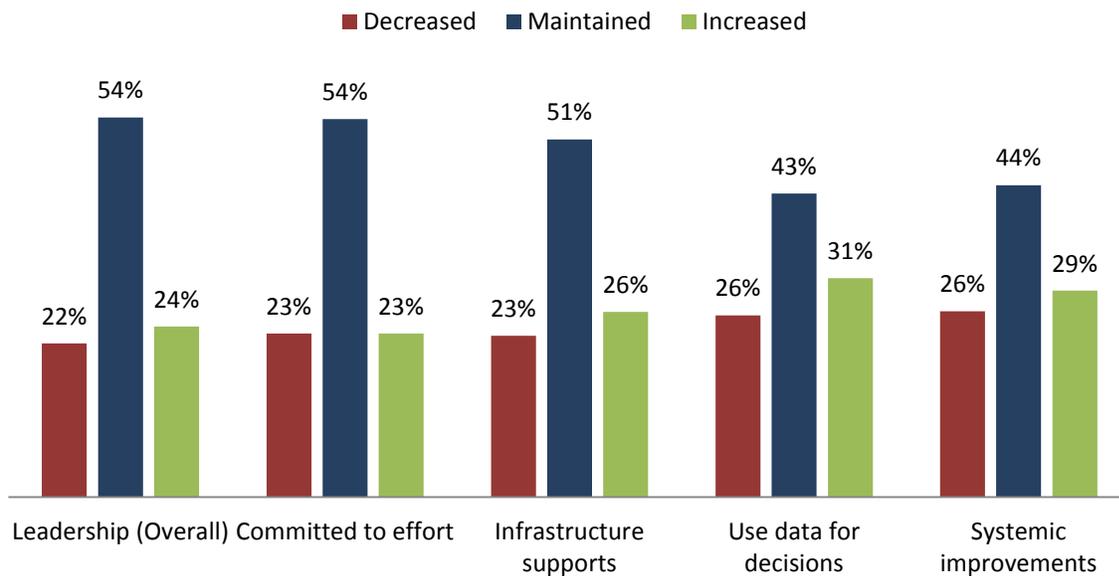
Of the 376 schools responding to all questions in the ELA cluster in both years, 55 schools (15 percent) reported full implementation in 2014 and 74 schools (20 percent) in 2015. When comparing all of the 358 responders across both years, 49 percent report sustaining implementation at the level they were the previous year, with 30 percent at the partial implementation for both years (see Appendix B).

What is the picture of implementation in each area of focus?

Changes within leadership

Additional subscale analyses were conducted to identify targets for growth and change, analyses. There are meaningful trends within each subscale worth noting.

Summary of Changes in Leadership Implementation of ELA and MTSS from 2014 to 2015



The graph illustrates the percentage of schools who rated their implementation lower than the previous year, those who sustained implementation at the level they rated last year, and those who rated that they increased implementation from last year. The Leadership (overall) consists of four subscales: Committed to Effort, Infrastructure Supports, Data-based Decision Making, and Systematic Improvements. There are items related to English Language Arts standards embedded within these analyses.

There were 380 responses to items in the leadership cluster. The subscale with the highest level of implementation is a commitment to the effort of fully implementing the ELA standards and MTSS. The leadership cluster was designed to describe a typical progression of implementation. Initiatives begin with a commitment of effort. They progress when leadership acts on the commitment by ensuring the infrastructure is in place for staff to deliver the practices. Leadership continues to advance the effort when it gathers and uses data to systemically improve the practices and strengthen the infrastructure. Full implementation is typically achieved when leadership systematically measures and uses data to make adjustments until fidelity and outcomes are achieved and sustained.

Within the subscales, it was anticipated that the data would: a) show more schools completing exploration, reporting full commitment to the implementation of the standards and MTSS and b) show fewer teams at full implementation, using data to make systematic improvements. The data shows that:

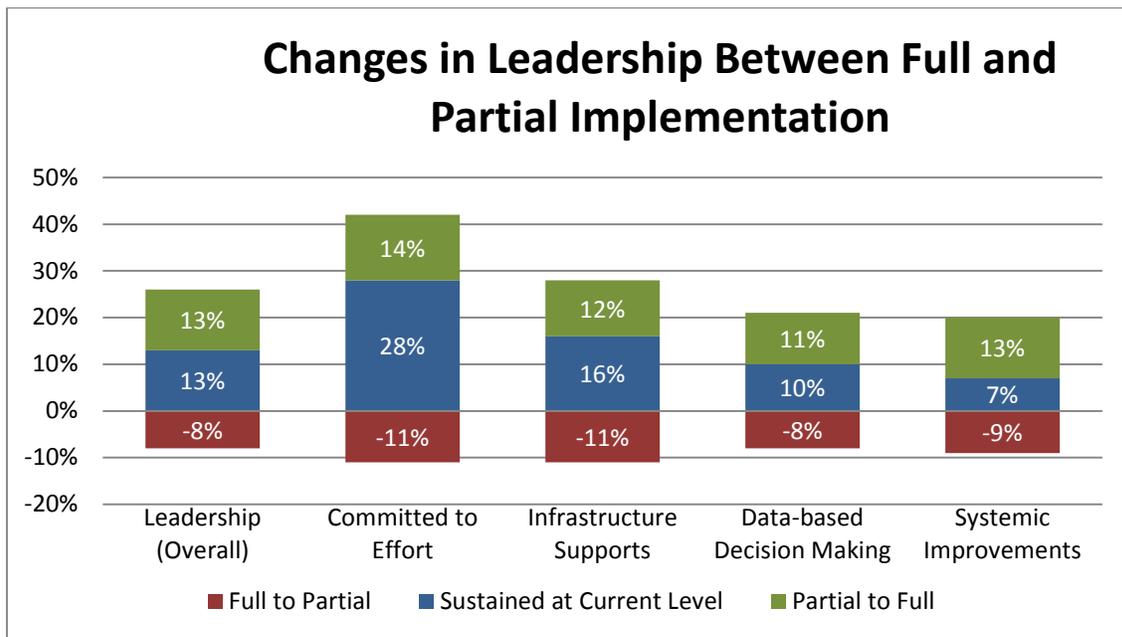
- 161 schools report full commitment to implementation in 2015,
- 106 schools report full implementation of infrastructure supports,
- 81 schools report full implementation in use of data for making decisions, and
- 76 schools report full implementation of procedures that systematically improve implementation and supports.

Although the data suggests the expected progression what is concerning is that if leadership does not reach full implementation of its role and function there is little chance of the other clusters reaching full implementation. This is significant because Minnesota state legislation requires the standards go through a cycle of revision and adoption every nine years. If the

process is not predictably carried out then misalignment between standards, practices and assessment will increase the likelihood that students will not receive the Tier 1 instruction they need. Ineffective and inefficient Tier 1 puts greater pressure on the school to increase Tier 2 and 3 supports. The greater the needs are for Tier 2 and 3 supports the more resources, time, staff and leadership are needed. If MTSS is not proven at a local level to lead to increased numbers of students achieving proficiency, it will likely be abandoned. The cycle of adoption and abandonment will likely persist.

The data suggests this theme is evident in each of the other subscales.

Additional analysis also reveals changing levels of capacity in each subscale across the two years. In each of the subscales, gains in implementation capacity (green bars) were counterbalanced for by decreases in implementation capacity (blue bars on the graph show regression of implementation capacity).



Green bars indicate school ratings are moving from partial to full implementation. Blue bars indicate schools maintaining full implementation for both years. Red bars show regression in implementation from full to partial. There is more progress being made in the commitment subscale than in the data-based decision making and infrastructure support subscales. The growth in data-based decision making and systemic improvements is almost completely offset by those who rated themselves as lower capacity.

Open item responses and responses from the MTSS Community of Practices have suggested the following hypotheses for the variability:

- There may be decreased implementation in schools with a turnover in a key leadership position.
- Implementation is likely adversely impacted due to changes in school budgets, cuts to infrastructure, rigid schedules, having enough staff to support implementation and establishing a time for staff to meet and collaborate on data.
- Teams may rate themselves more conservatively in year two than in year one because they are now more aware of what they did not know.

Data collected in the survey allowed for testing the first hypothesis. Respondents were asked, “Has a key member of your leadership and implementation team turned over in the last 9 months? (Yes or no for the different positions –check all that apply). Of the 380 who responded, 38 percent of reported a turnover of leadership between the administrations in 2014 and a cross-tab analysis was conducted to see if turnover could be attributed to lower levels of implementation. The following table shows the number of respondents indicating turnover of a specific position and if their leadership implementation increased, maintained, or decreased.

Turnover and Leadership Scores

Leadership (Overall)

	Coaches (all)	Curriculum Leader	Principal / VP
Increase in implementation rating	2 (.5%)	10 (2.6%)	15 (3.9%)
Maintained implementation rating	2 (.5%)	11 (2.9%)	25 (6.6%)
Decreased implementation rating	1 (.26%)	4 (1.1%)	18 (4.7%)

Note: Findings come from a cross-tab analysis of 380 responses to the question.

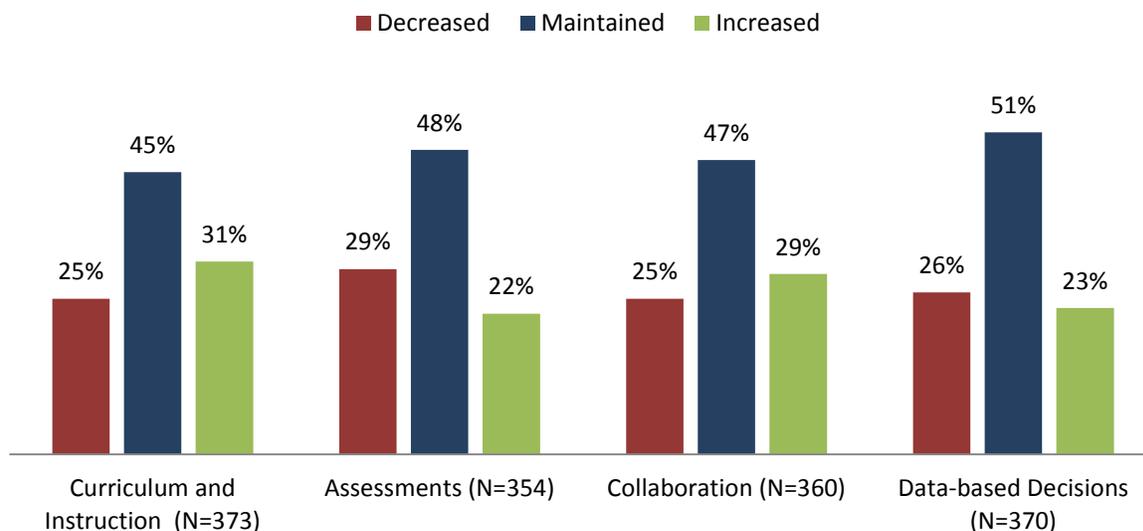
The data indicate higher rates of principal and assistant principal turnover than other key positions on implementation teams. The data showed that turnover in principals may not be a critical variable in explaining decreases in leadership implementation. Analysis of changes in all four subscales revealed that there was less than a percentage point difference between those who sustained, increased and decreased implementation despite the turnover.

As for the second hypothesis, there is not specific causal data indicating decreases in implementation connected to budget cuts, but many comments from the open item response section describe implementation challenges related to money. Open item responses indicate the three most frequently cited challenges fall into the category of infrastructure supports. The number one topic of comment (189 unique comments) was the need for adequate time to schedule interventions outside of core instruction and for staff to meet to review data. There were 107 comments describing the need for more professional development and training. Money was the third most frequently noted comment. In future years, we may ask directly how changes in budgets are specifically impacting implementation capacity, as well as how schools are managing to prevent this variable from reducing capacity.

The third hypothesis remains untestable with the data currently available. Anecdotally, we have heard from a handful of responders who called after receiving the results from the second survey showing a decrease in implementation. They felt they what was needed during the first survey and reported that their team was more critical on the second administration. We did conduct a cohort analysis comparing the responses from those who completed the survey only in 2014 with those who completed it only in 2015. Those who responded in 2015 showed an overall higher level of implementation than the 2014 cohort. The difference in rating, although interesting, does not provide us with insight into the possible reasons teams made for more conservative ratings in the second year.

Changes within Core Instruction (Tier 1)

Summary of Changes in the Delivery of High Quality Core Instruction (Tier 1)

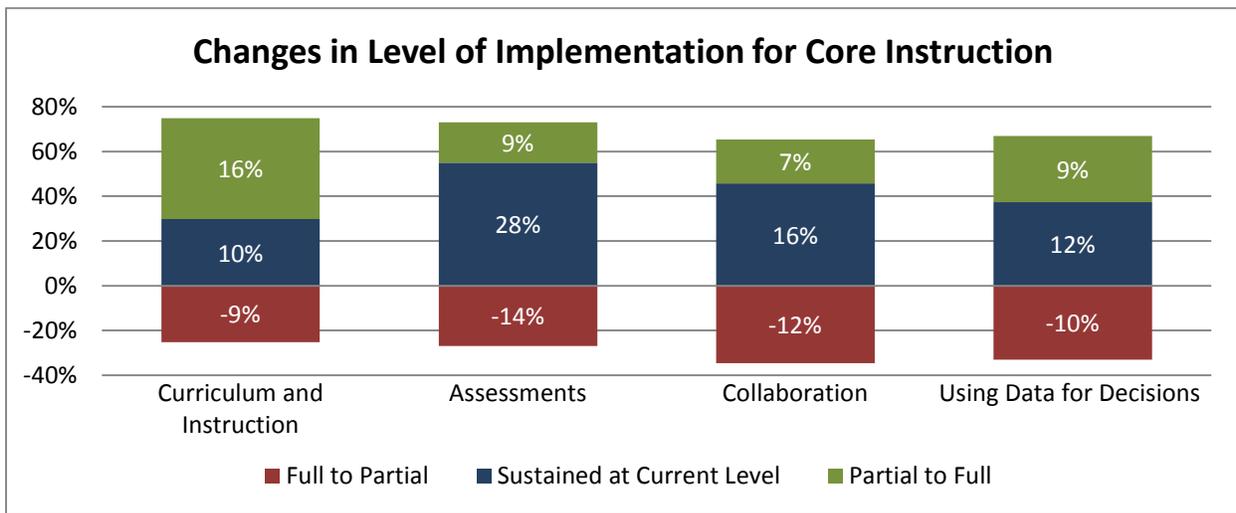


The graph illustrates, over the last year, the percentage of schools who lowered their level of implementation, those who sustained implementation, and those who rated that they increased their implementation. The total number of schools responding to items in each cluster has been added to support the interpretation.

In breaking down the Core Instruction (Tier 1) cluster into subscales to determine trends, we first see variation in the number of responses to each subscale. There are fewer responses to the assessments subscale than the other subscales (e.g. 354 vs. 373 to the subscale for curriculum and instruction). Items making up the cluster come from across the survey; therefore, it is not likely that the changes in responses are due to fatigue.

Despite 20 fewer schools responding to items in the assessments subscale, the number of schools sustaining and fully implementing assessments that inform instructional and programmatic decisions for core instruction is higher than all the other subscales. There were 106 schools with full implementation in 2014, and the number rose to 150 (40 percent of responders) in 2015. Given the emphasis on Reading Well by Grade 3 and requirements to have a screening system in place at grades K-2, it makes sense that this is an area of higher implementation. Further analyses of responses by elementary, middle and high schools indicates that fewer middle and high schools have assessment systems in place for core instruction. Additionally, open item responses indicate that a specific area of need is screening tools for middle and high school in the area of reading.

Although assessments used to inform instruction has the greatest number at full implementation, it also has the greatest regression. The chart below shows increases and decreases in implementation for each of the subscales.



Red bars show downgrading of implementation from full to partial. Blue bars indicate schools maintaining the same level of implementation for both years. Green bars indicate school ratings are moving from partial to full implementation. There is more progress being made with activities in the curriculum and instruction subscale than in the collaboration and using data for making decisions subscales.

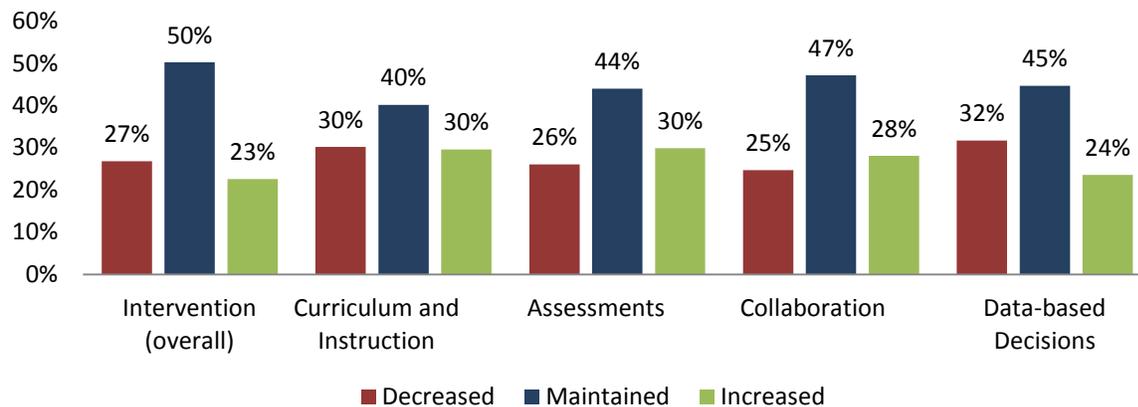
It is important to understand the data shows that implementation is not an event, but is a process that varies across time and requires continuous attention and action planning to increase and maintain. Concerns regarding the assessment of core instruction were the 17th most frequently noted issue in open item responses. However, the impact of changing data and assessment systems can have a significant impact on progress in multiple subscales. Every time there is a change in data system or assessments used to measure progress in the standards, screen students to determine intervention needs, etc., implementation dips in the areas of collaboration, use of data to make decisions, and curriculum and instruction. Staff have to re-learn procedures, re-establish decision rules, be trained to access and understand new reports, and correlate findings from new assessments with old assessments to make informed decisions about core instruction and alignment with standards and benchmarks.

Regression of implementation in core instruction out-paces progress in 3 of 4 subscales. Data indicates that 89 of 370 or 24 percent of respondents have reached and sustained full implementation of core instruction from adoption to consistent use of data to implement core instruction. It should be concerning given that up to 75 percent of responders may not even complete the cycle of standards adoption and practice improvement and alignment. Additional data measuring fidelity of core instruction and achievement data could be an important tool for leadership teams at the district and school level to use in action planning to increase the pace of and sustained implementation. The following quote, from one of the open response items, illustrates the point.

“Fidelity of instruction in what has been determined as practices and routines during our schoolwide 30-minute reading and math RtI blocks. Teachers straying from this implementation is a concern. Addressing the issues improves the system for a period of time, and then it waivers again, and we cycle back to fidelity.”

Changes within Supplemental and Intensive Interventions Tiers 2 and 3.

Summary of Changes in Implementation of Supplemental and Intensive Interventions (Tiers 2 and 3)



The graph illustrates, over the last year, the percentage of schools who lowered their level of implementation, those who sustained implementation, and those who rated that they increased their implementation.

The data is very likely showing that the need and problem-solving capacity in schools outpaces solutions that are sustainably implemented. Schools (145 of 358) are further along in fully implementing assessments and collaboration (137 of 358) than they are in selecting evidence-based interventions and using data to make decisions. Open item responses indicate that finding and selecting evidence-based practices is the fourth largest challenge to schools. This is especially true for staff working in middle and high schools.

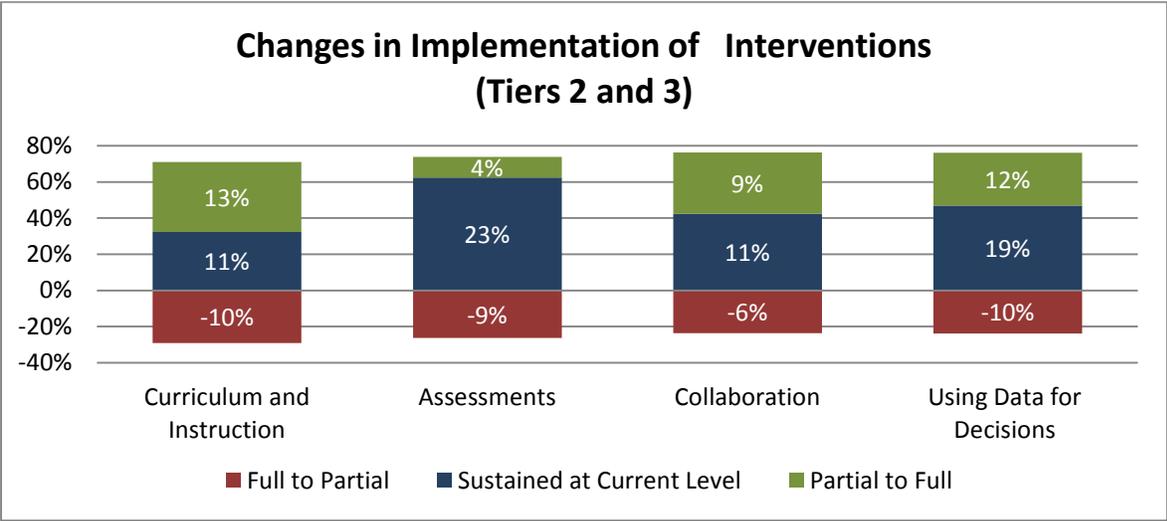
The number one comment in open item responses indicates a significant challenge to implementing Tiers 2 and 3 lies in selecting, scheduling and staffing interventions. The following range of comments made by responders characterize the challenges:

- “One challenge has been wading through the vast amount of interventions to find the ones that make the most difference for our students. We are still working to choose the most appropriate interventions.”
- “The biggest challenge for our school has been identifying the exact need of the students and the intervention that fits.” And “We are also struggling with providing a viable curriculum that is standards-based with a clearly defined scope and sequence. We are curriculum poor as a district.”
- “Finding actual interventions that work to narrow the gap for high school age students. Doing interventions for high school age students and meeting the state required Carnegie unit credits for each discipline at the same time.

These are a conflict for every high school principal I have spoken to---we call these institutional barriers.”

- “Also, a specific challenge, is that we have worked hard to create a school-wide system of intervention support for students in reading, but we do not have the resources to expand this same level of support in math. MOST of our students are below grade level due to a variety of factors and so numbers of students serviced and waiting to be serviced are almost overwhelming. We can do it for reading, but not also for math.”

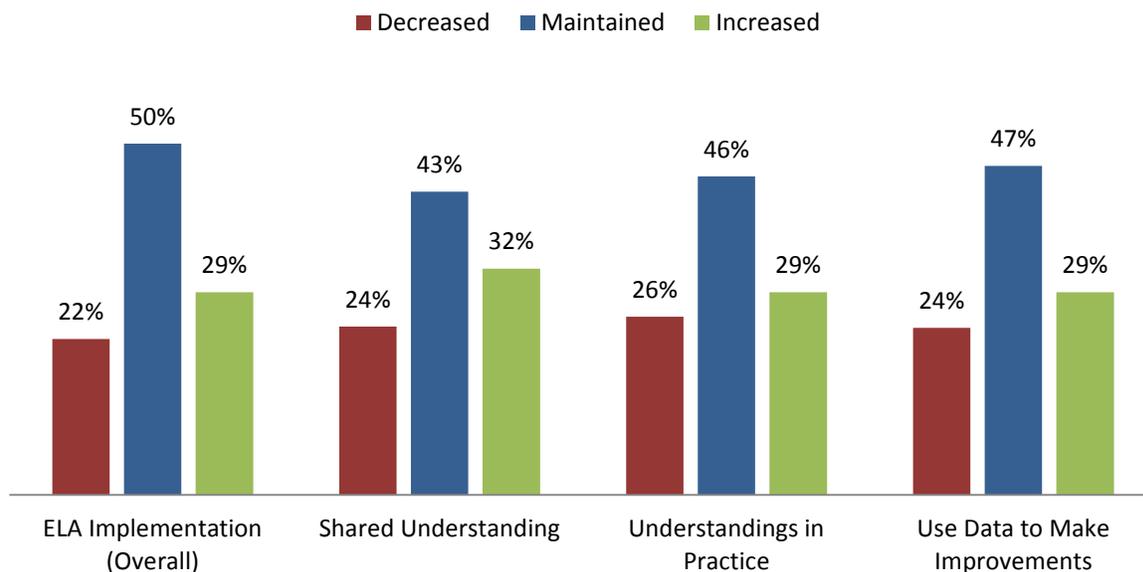
Clearly adding content and behavioral areas is a challenge as resources can be deployed in one content area, but expansion to include two or more areas typically exceeds advanced implementer’s capacity. Finding interventions at older grade levels is also challenge not just for the task of finding the evidence base practice in a sea of providers, but also for identifying consistency in student performance that would make group interventions efficient. Poor fidelity in core instruction can lead to greater diversity in intervention needs. In addition to the diversity of gaps in skills and competencies needed to increase reading comprehension and mathematical practices, these competencies show lower rates of growth over short periods of time. It may take more time and days of instruction than are available to serve all the students in need. The combination of challenges may be the most viable explanation for lagging rates of full implementation of interventions and use of data.



Green bars indicate school ratings are moving from partial to full implementation. Blue bars indicate schools maintaining the same level of implementation. Red bars show downgrading of implementation from full to partial implementation. The gains in the implementation of curriculum and instruction and use of data outpaces the other subscales. Losses to implementation capacity in assessment outpace gains.

Changes in implementation of English Language Arts Standards

Summary of Changes in ELA Standards Implementation



The graph illustrates, over the last year, the percentage of schools who lowered their level of implementation, those who sustained implementation, and those who rated that they increased their implementation.

In breaking down the ELA cluster into subscales to determine trends, there were responses from 373 participants. Full implementation peaks at 32 percent of responders are reporting having shared understanding of the ELA standards. Full implementation is up 10 percent over a year ago. There is a two percentage point decrease in the number of responders who indicate their staff can put the understandings into practice. As far as being prepared to use the data for making continuous improvements to instruction, those at full implementation drops to 12 percent. Using data to make systematic improvements is clearly an area for action planning and improvement.

In summary, across all subscales having to do with making data-based decisions we see lower numbers of schools at full implementation. The majority of schools are sustaining at partial implementation.

Conclusion

The results of analysis of changes in implementation as indicated by schools completing the survey two years in a row has revealed two issues for further study.

Still concerning are the rates of turnover in key leadership positions of 33 percent in 2014 and 38 percent in 2015. Changes in specific leaders and the potential impacts on implementation require further study such whether there are circumstances under which turnover advances implementation. It would also be important to examine what can be learned to prevent changes in leaders or key positions from adversely impacting implementation. Is turnover in leadership positions equal, greater or less impactful than stable budgets, access to resources or coaching infrastructure?

The growth rate in implementation of both ELA standards and key features of MTSS is also very concerning. At the current rate the majority of schools completing the survey will not achieve full implementation and see results of systematic efforts to “close the achievement gap” before the standards adoption cycle begins again. The lack of data-based decision making, use of data to measure impact and connect actions to student outcomes is likely to jeopardize commitment and likely to lead to abandonment. Worse yet, it could lead to the characterization that standards are ineffective and that MTSS does not work. Both would be incorrect statements.

Minnesota Department of Education continues its commitment to improving implementation of the standards and MTSS and is in the process of developing fidelity measures and guidance for districts and schools to develop data-based action plans.

Appendix A: Guiding Questions and Item Clusters

Overall	Items (subscale)
Is Leadership is committed to this effort?	<p>1A. Leadership and staff share responsibility for the academic achievement of ALL children by taking a collective approach to reviewing data and systematically improving instruction.</p> <p>1B. The principal and school leadership team are actively committed to a multi-year RtI implementation.</p> <p>2A. Tier 2/3: The school has a plan (combining high-quality core instruction with intensive tiered supports) to accelerate learning for all students receiving supplemental interventions, so they meet grade-level standards in 2-3 years.</p> <p>4A. Tier 1: The principal and leadership team models and supports effective collaboration and communication around school-wide efforts, benefiting all students.</p>
To what extent does the Infrastructure support implementation?	<p>1C. Instructional staff have been trained on how the RtI framework is represented in the school (including implications for curricula, assessment, and organization).</p> <p>1D. School-wide schedules are aligned to support delivery of multiple levels of high-quality instruction based on students' needs.</p> <p>2C. Tier 2/3: School schedule allows for the amount of time necessary to deliver the intervention as it was designed.</p> <p>1E. Instructional staff are in place to support delivery of multiple levels of high-quality instruction based on students' needs.</p> <p>1G. School-level leadership team commits adequate time and resources to support ongoing professional learning for school staff.</p> <p>1F. Collaboration around student data and instruction are built into school expectations, schedules, and calendar.</p> <p>1H. The school has a consistent data system that tracks assessment results and instructional decisions (leaders use it to ensure accountability and in selecting appropriate professional development options).</p> <p>1I. The school-level leadership team meets regularly to oversee the ongoing implementation of school-wide RtI.</p> <p>4H. Tier 1: School teams' meetings are scheduled with sufficient duration and frequency to complete necessary tasks.</p> <p>4K. Tier 1: Team members, those essential to complete the tasks and decisions, regularly attend and participate actively during meetings.</p> <p>4I. Tier 1: Team meeting protocols/processes/ agendas are clearly communicated and include student data, goals, and tasks directly related to increasing student achievement.</p> <p>4J. Tier 1: There is effective facilitation/leadership at team meetings.</p> <p>1K. School-wide RtI actions and results are regularly communicated to multiple stakeholder audiences, including all school staff, families, school board members, and the community.</p>

Overall	Items (subscale)
<p>To what extent does leadership uses data for decisions?</p>	<p>2M. Tier 1: Multiple measures are used to review the overall effectiveness of core curricula and instruction for all students and instruction is adjusted accordingly.</p> <p>2K. Tier 1: Multiple measures are used to review the overall effectiveness of core curricula and instruction for sub-groups of students and instruction is adjusted accordingly.</p> <p>2J. Tier 1: Student performance data are used to make programmatic adjustments and refinements in how instruction is designed and delivered.</p> <p>2H. Tier 1: Observation, effort, fidelity, and student performance data are used to identify professional development needs necessary to implement RtI/MTSS effectively.</p> <p>1L. School-level leadership team gathers data and makes real-time decisions to further the implementation of the MN English Language Arts Standards.</p>
<p>To what extent does leadership make systematic improvements?</p>	<p>1J. Leadership has team reviews and adjusts core and supplemental instruction to increase effectiveness and efficiency for all groups of students.</p> <p>1M. The alignment between standards, benchmarks, curriculum, instruction and assessment is evaluated for effectiveness (alignment means the act of adjusting to match a benchmark).</p> <p>2I. Tier 1: Team responsible for MN ELA standards implementation reviews results of training and coaching efforts to determine next steps for professional development.</p> <p>3M. Tier 1: The effectiveness and efficiency of the assessment processes are reviewed by school-building teams.</p> <p>4B. Tier 1: School leadership teams have and use their authority to make real-time structural changes, change schedules, and allocate resources to best meet the needs of students.</p>

Core Instruction	
Overall	Items (subscale)
<p>To what extent are we implementing high-quality curriculum & instruction at Tier 1?</p>	<p>2A. Tier 1: Staff responsible for teaching and reinforcing the MN ELA standards can level, as well as one grade below to one grade above. Describe the knowledge and skills that comprise the benchmarks within their grade</p> <p>2B. Tier 1: Staff responsible for teaching and reinforcing the MN ELA standards can describe the intended student work (evidence) that reflects the standard and benchmark.</p> <p>2C. Tier 1: Staff responsible for teaching and reinforcing the MN ELA standards can identify requisites in the development of knowledge, skills, and concepts within and across strands.</p> <p>2D. Tier 1: Staff responsible for teaching and reinforcing the MN ELA standards have access to a curriculum scope and sequence that illustrates when to model, provide practice, expect mastery or elaborate on benchmarks within the grade level</p> <p>2E. Tier 1: Lessons and units are designed to provide sufficient practice for of ALL students to achieve the depth of knowledge required in the standards and benchmarks. The depth of knowledge level is not synonymous with mastery.</p> <p>2G. Tier 1: Instructional models and materials and evidence-based practices are Universally Designed (UD) and aligned to grade level standards/benchmarks. UD is a defined set of principles that gives all students equal opportunities to learn</p> <p>2L. Tier 1: Curricula and instruction are differentiated based on student needs. (Differentiation is what a teacher does to make instruction accessible; it is altering of process, content, product to attain end outcome.)</p> <p>2N. Tier 1: Instructional staff are knowledgeable about and implement principles of effective instruction, including research-based practices in literacy</p>
<p>To what extent do we have assessments that inform instructional and programmatic decisions Tier 1?</p>	<p>3A. Tier 1: A system of assessments is in place for staff to monitor and adjust instruction throughout the year.</p> <p>3F. Tier 1: School ensures assessment tools/processes used are valid and reliable for the population the school serves (culturally representative).</p> <p>3G. Tier 1: Staff responsible for assessments are trained to a high degree of reliability in the standard administration, scoring, and interpretation of all assessments used.</p> <p>3B. Tier 1: Assessments at the lesson and unit levels are valid and reliable indicators of progress toward grade level benchmarks.</p> <p>3E. Tier 1: All students are screened multiple times per year using valid and reliable screening measures for reading/literacy.</p> <p>3H. Tier 1: Instructional staff understand and can communicate to parents/guardians the purposes and value of the assessments used, as well as their limitations</p>

Overall	Items (subscale)
To what extent do we collaborate to improve Tier 1?	<p>4D. Tier 1: Staff members in the grade level/content area teams include general education staff and staff with specialized knowledge (reading interventionists, ELL, special education, and/or related service providers).</p> <p>4E. Tier 1: There is common understanding of the purpose and unique roles of each team within the school building and of the ways in which these teams interrelates</p> <p>4F. Tier 1: Teams collaborate across grade levels/content areas about universal student data and instructional practices.</p> <p>4L. Tier 1: Staff are working with sub-groups (e.g., low income, of racial/ethnic minority background, ELL) of students regularly collaborate with grade level content teams on instructional practices.</p> <p>2O. Tier 1: Parents/guardians are provided with resources and strategies on how to support their children's learning at home.</p> <p>3L. Tier 1: Assessments' results are communicated to parents/guardians in a language-appropriate and easy-to-understand format.</p>
To what extent do we use data to implement and improve Tier 1?	<p>2P. Tier 1: School follows a process, protocol, or agenda that includes data to guide grade level/content area implementation and improvement decisions.</p> <p>4G. Tier 1: Grade-level, and building-level, teams consistently follow a problem-solving process to make data-based decisions that promote academic improvement.</p> <p>3I. Tier 1: Data used for decision-making are accessible and timely for instructional planning.</p> <p>3J. Tier 1: Instructional supports for students are determined based on sources of data and predictable rules for decision making.</p> <p>2F. Tier 1: Student performance data inform the design of instruction and use of evidence-based practices.</p> <p>3C. Tier 1: Student work is analyzed, and results are used to improve lessons and assessments and give specific feedback to students. (Standards-based rubrics, protocols, etc. are used to analyze student work).</p> <p>3D. Tier 1: Standards-based grading system that measures and monitors progress toward benchmarks is in place with reliable ratings between staff.</p> <p>3H. Tier 1: Instructional staff understand and can communicate to parents/guardians the purposes and value of the assessments used, as well as their limitations.</p> <p>4M. Tier 1: Teams maintain records of students they have served.</p>

Supplemental and Intensive Intervention	
Overall	Items (subscale)
To what extent do we have high-quality curriculum & instruction at Tier 2/3?	<p>2B. Tier 2/3: School has a process, in response to performance data, for selecting evidence-based interventions for students not meeting grade-level benchmarks in literacy.</p> <p>2D. Tier 2/3: Evidence-based interventions are aligned with the ELA standards and delivered as intended.</p> <p>2E. Tier 2/3: Staff who provide interventions can articulate the evidence-base and corresponding ELA standards' benchmarks that the interventions are designed to help students achieve.</p>
To what extent do we have assessments that inform instruction in Tier 2/3?	<p>3A. Tier 2/3: School uses valid and reliable diagnostic assessments to provide additional information for determining the appropriate supplemental and intensive interventions for a student.</p> <p>3B. Tier 2/3: School uses valid and reliable tools to monitor the progress of students receiving supplemental and intensive interventions.</p> <p>3C. Tier 2/3: School uses a process, based on the intensity of the intervention, to determine the frequency of progress monitoring for students receiving supplemental and intensive interventions.</p>
To what extent do we collaborate to implement and improve Tier 2/3?	<p>3D. Tier 2/3: Service providers or data teams frequently review progress-monitoring data to gauge whether students are making adequate progress in response to their interventions.</p> <p>4A. Tier 2/3: There is a consistent process to guide grade level/content area team discussions and decisions about supplemental interventions.</p> <p>4B. Tier 2/3: Culture and language of students are considered when collaborating in grade level/content area teams about the appropriate supports for students needing supplemental interventions.</p> <p>4C. Tier 2/3: Multiple staff members in grade level/content area teams are involved when determining the appropriate type and level of intensity of interventions for students in need of supplemental interventions or supports.</p> <p>2F. Tier 2/3: Parents/guardians are notified when their child begins a supplemental intervention.</p> <p>2G. Tier 2/3: Parents/guardians are engaged as active participants in the problem-solving process for students receiving supplemental interventions (e.g., intervention plan, timelines, and data to be collected, decision-making rules).</p> <p>2H. Tier 2/3: Parents/guardians of students who receive supplemental interventions are provided reports on their children's interventions, goals, and progress toward their goals.</p>

Overall	Items (subscale)
To what extent do we use data to make implementation and improvement decisions for Tier 2/3?	<p>3E. Tier 2/3: School frequently reviews progress-monitoring data to gauge if individual students are making progress toward grade-level goals.</p> <p>3F. Tier 2/3: Student-level progress-monitoring data and instructional decisions are documented for students receiving supplemental and intensive interventions.</p> <p>2I. Tier 2/3: Supplemental interventions are evaluated for their effectiveness and efficiency in moving all students toward core instruction and proficiency.</p> <p>2J. Tier 2/3: Supplemental interventions are evaluated for their effectiveness and efficiency in moving sub-groups (e.g. low income, of racial/ethnic minority background, and ELL) of students towards core instruction and proficiency.</p>
To what extent are the ELA standards being implemented?	
Overall	Items (subscale)
To what extent do staff have a common understanding of the standards?	<p>4C. Tier 1: General educators and staff with specialized knowledge (special education, ELL, reading interventionists and/or related services) routinely collaborate to design and deliver standards-based instruction.</p> <p>2A. Tier 1: Staff responsible for teaching and reinforcing the MN ELA standards can describe the knowledge and skills that comprise the benchmarks within their grade level, as well as one grade below to one grade above.</p> <p>2D. Tier 1: Staff responsible for teaching and reinforcing the MN ELA standards have access to a curriculum scope and sequence that illustrates when to model, provide practice, expect mastery or elaborate on benchmarks within the grade level.</p>
To what extent can staff put their understandings into practice?	<p>2B. Tier 1: Staff responsible for teaching and reinforcing the MN ELA standards can describe the intended student work (evidence) that reflects the standard and benchmark.</p> <p>2C. Tier 1: Staff responsible for teaching and reinforcing the MN ELA standards can identify requisites in the development of knowledge, skills, and concepts within and across strands.</p> <p>2E. Tier 2/3: Staff who provide interventions can articulate the evidence-base and corresponding ELA standards' benchmarks that the interventions are designed to help students achieve.</p> <p>2D. Tier 2/3: Evidence-based interventions are aligned to the ELA standards and delivered as intended.</p>

Overall	Items (subscale)
<p>To what extent are staff gathering and using data to make improvements?</p>	<p>3C. Tier 1: Student work is analyzed, and results are used to improve lessons and assessments and give specific feedback to students. (Standards-based rubrics, protocols, etc. are used to analyze student work).</p> <p>3D. Tier 1: Standards-based grading system that measures and monitors progress toward benchmarks is in place with reliable ratings between staff.</p> <p>2I. Tier 1: Team responsible for MN ELA standards implementation reviews results of training and coaching efforts to determine next steps for professional development.</p> <p>1L. School-level leadership team gathers data and makes real-time decisions to further the implementation of the MN English Language Arts Standards.</p> <p>1M. The alignment between standards, benchmarks, curriculum, instruction and assessment is evaluated for effectiveness (alignment means the act of adjusting to match a benchmark).</p>

Appendix B: Pairwise Comparisons of Clustered Items

Leadership (Overall)

		2015				
n = 380		Not in place	Explore	Install	Partial	Full
2014	Not in place	0	0	2	0	1
	Exploring	2	5	13	4	1
	Installing infrastructure	1	9	35	33	6
	Partial implementation	0	4	26	114	32
	Full implementation	0	1	6	34	51

Total Decrease: 83 (21.8 percent)

Total Maintain: 205 (53.9 percent)

Total Increase: 92 (24.2 percent)

Of the 380 schools responding to all questions in the Leadership cluster, in both years, 92 schools (24 percent) reported full implementation in 2014, and 91 schools (24 percent) in 2015. When comparing all of the 380 responders across both years, 54 percent report sustaining implementation at the level they were the previous year, with 30 percent at partial implementation for both years.

Core Implementation (Overall)

		2015				
n = 374		Not in place	Exploring	Installing Infrastructure	Partial Implementation	Full implementation
2014	Not in place	0	0	1	2	0
	Exploring	2	5	10	0	0
	Installing infrastructure	1	4	24	29	4
	Partial implementation	1	4	32	138	33
	Full implementation	0	1	6	30	47

Total Decrease: 81 (21.7 percent)

Total Maintain: 214 (57.2 percent)

Total Increase: 79 (21.1 percent)

Of the 374 schools responding to all questions in the Tier 1 cluster, in both years, 84 schools (22 percent) reported full implementation in 2014 and 84 schools (22 percent) in 2015. When comparing all of the 374 responders across both years, 57 percent report sustaining implementation at the level they were the previous year, with 37 percent at partial implementation for both years.

Supplemental and Intensive Intervention (Overall)

		2015				
358		Not in place	Exploring	Installing Infrastructure	Partial Implementation	Full implementation
2014	Not in place	3	0	1	1	0
	Exploring	5	7	11	5	1
	Installing infrastructure	0	6	29	22	8
	Partial implementation	2	11	30	98	32
	Full implementation	1	1	6	34	44

Total Decrease: 96 (26.8 percent)

Total Maintain: 181 (50.6 percent)

Total Increase: 81 (22.6 percent)

Of the 358 schools responding to all questions in the Tier 2/3 cluster, in both years, 86 schools (24 percent) reported full implementation in 2014 and 85 schools (24 percent) in 2015. When comparing all of the 358 responders across both years, 51 percent report sustaining implementation at the level they were the previous year, with 27 percent at partial implementation for both years.

To what extent are the ELA standards being implemented? (Overall)

		2015				
376		Not in place	Exploring	Installing Infrastructure	Partial Implementation	Full implementation
2014	Not in place	0	1	3	0	1
	Exploring	1	6	8	3	0
	Installing infrastructure	1	7	40	43	9
	Partial implementation	1	5	37	114	41
	Full implementation	0	1	7	24	23

Total Decrease: 84 (22.3 percent)

Total Maintain: 183 (50.3 percent)

Total Increase: 109 (29.0 percent)

Of the 376 schools responding to all questions in the ELA cluster, in both years, 55 schools (15 percent) reported full implementation in 2014 and 74 schools (20 percent) in 2015. When comparing all of the 358 responders across both years, 49 percent report sustaining implementation at the level they were the previous year, with 30 percent at partial implementation for both years.