Brief Introduction to eMINTS

- eMINTS is a research and outreach center at the University of Missouri

- Established in 1999 through a partnership between the University of Missouri, the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, and the Missouri Department of Higher Education.

- Mission: Impact teaching and learning through a powerful combination of research-based strategies and technology.

- eMINTS is both a National Center and the name of our first and most mature professional development program.

About the eMINTS Instructional Model

All of our programs begin with the four components of our instructional model

- Community of learners

- High-quality lesson design

- Authentic learning

- Powered by technology

Understanding Fit & Fidelity

Defining Fit & Fidelity

Defining Fit

- *Fit* is the degree to which a program is suited to the specific conditions of a site. An evaluation of fidelity to an original program

- Achieving fit means the **program aligns with the availability of a site's resources** (staffing, time, and funding) **and the unique aspects of the local context** (staffing characteristics, community setting, or political context) (Backer, 2002; Fixsen, Naoom, Blasé, Friedman, & Wallace, 2005).

Defining Fidelity

- *Fidelity* is the degree to which a program is implemented as it was intended by its designers.

- An evaluation of fidelity to an original program **allows researchers to prove that a program is effective across settings** (Carroll, Patterson, Wood, Booth, Rick & Balain, 2007).

eMINTS Fidelity Matrix

Components

- Instructional coaching

- Interactive teacher PD

- Administrator support and PD

- Support calls

- Train-the-trainer variation (repeats all components for trainers)

For Each Component We Examine

- Delivery

- Adherence

- Perceived Quality

Why Balancing Fit & Fidelity is Important

- Some research indicates that **local adaptations** to meet site-specific needs during scale-up are **commonplace and necessary**.

- Many programs result in positive outcomes for students despite or because of **significant adaptation to local needs** (Backer, 2002).

- Some research offers strong empirical evidence that **high levels of implementation fidelity lead to better outcomes** (Durlak & Dupre, 2008; Backer, 2002; Blakely, C., Mayer, P., Gottschalk, J., Schmitt, N., Davidson, William, B. Roitman, D & Emshoff, J., 1987).

Balancing Fit & Fidelity is a Process

- As grantees move from the emerging phase into the validation and scaling phases, their **mindsets must also shift** as they consider the balance between fidelity and fit in new ways.

- **This process is a continuum.** As grantees move toward establishing evidence of impact, they must also **establish boundaries, guidelines, and procedures** along the way.

- In the **early stages** of implementation, a **fit-oriented framework** allows programs to **determine the key components** and processes that are essential to the intervention and achieve program objectives by **making key adaptations**.

- Building this evidence and **moving to a more concrete definition of fidelity is critical** to keeping a program running effectively toward the end goal of improving outcomes for students.

Our Journey

Our Journey: 1999 - 2005

- Early phase with an emphasis on fit

- Little sense of fidelity

- We were developing and adjusting our approach based on educated hunches and formative feedback from participants & staff

- We began conducting self-funded, in-house research designed to inform our program development and refinement.

Our Journey: 2005-2010

- Preparation for expansion, positive results mean that we need to pay attention to which components are "moving the needle"

- Shifted our in-house research to examine student outcomes on a small scale

- We were asking important questions that helped us shape our fidelity

  - How many hours do participants need to attend for certification?

  - How many classroom visits are required? How long are they supposed to last? What needed to happen in them?

  - What are the required components and format of our professional development sessions?

Our Journey: 2010 - 2015

- I3 Validation Grant brought our program to new contexts of rural schools

- We had to reframe our thinking in terms of fidelity **and** fit

- We worked closely with rural partners to understand their context

- Our external researchers team helped us establish rigorous fidelity measures based on our past research and program development.

- We began piloting a train-the-trainer program

Our Journey: 2015 - Present

- Previously, our pilots of train-the-trainer (in non-rural contexts) indicated high fidelity w/ train-the-trainer

- Second mid-phase grant investigating train-the-trainer program in 60 rural schools (we wanted to understand if it was an effective way to scale with fidelity)

- We needed to rethink fit and fidelity for a train-the-trainer program in rural contexts.

- Adaptations

  - Partnering with local education centers

  - Revision of administrator program

  - Virtual and blended PD

Moving Forward in the Context of COVID19

New fit adaptations

- Shift to online/blended PD

- Additional supports and resources aimed supporting distance learning

- Slowing down, shifting schedules to accommodate constant transition

- Echo sessions (responding to limited travel opportunities)

- Increased PD for non-certified teachers

New fidelity considerations

- How much PD can be online?

- What PD and supports do teachers need to be successful online?

- How does perceived quality change with the change in delivery?

- How do we ensure we meet the required extent of program delivery when we slow down the program?

Identifying Effective Adaptations

Methods we have used

- **Field initiated** changes from our staff who work closely with schools and educators

- Adaptation **proposals** from partner districts that include program monitoring and small-scale outcome evaluation

- Piloting of adaptations at selected sites

Closing Thoughts

Tips

- Finding the balance is an ongoing journey

- Fit and fidelity complement and inform each other

- The process changed the way we think about program development, scale, and adaptations

- Program implementers must drive fidelity considerations

Resources

- Whitepaper: [Scaling up Evidence-Based Practices: Strategies from Investing in Innovation](#)

- [Fit and fidelity worksheet](#) (Google Doc)