

Systems Thinking Adoption and Integration Plan

Each district plan is customized based on the needs and direction of the district. Factors such as strategic plans, district and school goals, achievement targets and community support all factor into the design of the adoption and integration plan. A plan gradually builds the systems thinking capacity of administrators and teachers districtwide to deliver academic and lifetime benefits to students. (See also the [Indicators of Readiness](#)) The systems thinking habits and tools offer both leadership and instructional strategies that align well with curricular and leadership standards and provide long-lasting skills that inform decision-making in life outside of school. Although “systems thinking” may be a new term to some, it does not have to be a new initiative because of how well it will support on-going district efforts. When fully integrated, systems thinking becomes part of organizational and classroom culture and practice, impacting the way people talk and think together.

Essential components

The following are essential components to the adoption and integration plan.

Level 1: Introduction to Systems Thinking: Developing Capacity for Thinking, Learning and Leading

This workshop will provide an introduction to systems thinking and its connections to other effective instructional practices and school improvement efforts. During the workshop, participants will

- develop skills and knowledge in the use of systems thinking concepts and tools
- experience, practice and discuss interactive, inquiry-based instructional and school improvement strategies
- use systems thinking tools to analyze complex issues and identify high leverage interventions
- develop and share a plan of application relevant to their work.

Approximately 4 days/30 hours which can be scheduled in one week or spread out throughout a semester or year.

Level 2: Embracing the Power of Visual Systems Thinking Tools

This workshop will build on the skills developed in Level 1. Participants will build interconnected loops, create stock/flow maps, and utilize the iceberg model as a framework for systems analysis. Another options is to include an introduction to dynamic computer modeling and simulations.

Approximately 2 to 4 days/15 to 30 hours which can be scheduled in one week or spread out throughout a semester or year.

Coaching

Follow-up coaching support is essential to effective systems thinking adoption and integration. Coaching may include

- classroom/on-the-job observation and debrief meetings
- demonstration lessons taught by the coach
- co-teaching opportunities pairing teachers with a coach
- collaborative meetings with small groups
- planning sessions with principal and/or teachers
- virtual/online coaching sessions

Learning Collaboratives

Structures for both formal and informal collaboration should be in place or developed. Learning Collaboratives are informal gatherings of educators interested in applying systems thinking to their work. Regularly scheduled, these meetings focus on refining and reviewing application of systems thinking concepts and tools as an ongoing follow-up to Level 1 and Level 2. Participants are encouraged to bring student work, learning artifacts, lesson plans, new activities, questions and resources to share. Many districts use existing collaborative learning structures (e.g. professional learning communities, PLCs) to ensure this type of follow-up and support.

Waters Foundation Training of Trainers (WFTOT)

In order to ensure the school district system's internal capacity to provide ongoing systems thinking workshops, coaching and facilitation of learning collaboratives, a select group of educators in the school system who demonstrate successful application of systems thinking habits and tools will be trained to assume training roles and eventually become certified by the Waters Foundation. This skilled group of district educators will be able to serve and support ongoing, districtwide adoption and integration of systems thinking.

Making a Plan

The following are considerations many district make when creating a plan:

Who should we start within Year 1?

- A specific group of schools or educators? (based on geography, feeder pattern, need, interest)
- Role-specific group, e.g. instructional coaches, principals?
- Everyone who is interested because we are small enough to involve all in Year 1?

Who should be involved in Year 2 and Year 3?

- Increase the number of schools or educators each year?
- Ask people who started in Year 1 to recruit and support people for Years 2 and 3?
- How might parents, community and students be involved?

What timeline or pace of adoption would best support our district?

- Workshops during the summer with coaching and collaboratives scheduled throughout the school year?
- Workshops scheduled throughout the school year with coaching and collaborative sessions scheduled intermittently?

How can we structure effective communication about the adoption and integration plan?

- Regular report to the Governing Board (e.g. with administrators, teachers and/or students sharing examples of how they have incorporated systems thinking and the documented results)
- Brief presentations sharing examples of systems thinking applications during principal meetings, school faculty meetings, PTO and PTA meetings, local and regional conferences
- Incorporate the language and tools of systems thinking as a part of day-to-day business of the district.

How and when will we begin to identify the candidates for WFTOT?

- Should candidates be recruited?
- Should there be an application process?
- Should there be district criteria to help identify candidates?
- How might their existing roles change after they become certified?