



*Final Report*

**Evaluation of the  
Connecticut Accountability for  
Learning Initiative (CALI)**

June 30, 2010



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*Submitted to:*  
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## Memorandum

**To:** Heather Levitt Doucette  
**From:** Carolyn Vincent  
**Date:** June 30, 2010  
**Re:** Deliverable submission

Please find attached the deliverable(s) listed below.

**Project Title:** Connecticut Accountability for Learning Initiative (CALI)  
**Deliverable:** CALI Evaluation Final Report  
**Due Date:** June 30, 2010  
**Submission Date:** June 30, 2010

It has been a pleasure and a privilege to work with Connecticut education leaders in conducting the CALI evaluation. This report is our final deliverable and I hope it is of use to you in the ongoing evolution of CALI. Congratulations on a tremendous amount of work accomplished and best wishes as you move ahead in your efforts to improve student achievement.

Thank you.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Connecticut Accountability for Learning Initiative (CALI) is well underway. The design, intentionally “built while flying,” is sound. Inputs and resources were sufficient during the initial stages of the work to support the model in early implementation, and will need to continue throughout these critical implementation years to reach fidelity and sustain the momentum. Participants are aware of CALI throughout partner districts and many of the districts’ schools; buy-in is growing. Key actions to bringing implementation to scale and sustaining this work are:

- Continuing to develop strong and focused state, district, and school leadership
- Continuing the fine tuning of the professional development modules, particularly of their quality, delivery, availability, and accountability through the quality assurance work
- Developing newer, more school- and classroom-embedded professional learning opportunities to sustain the implementation of the module content as well as the finer content and content pedagogy needed for instructional practice to change
- Increasing available resources in order to sustain the work and
- Communicating and marketing the need for CALI within and beyond education.

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) contracted with RMC Research Corporation to conduct an evaluation of the statewide system of support known as the Connecticut Accountability for Learning Initiative (CALI). Work on the evaluation began early in 2009, and continued through June, 2010. This Executive Summary provides an overview of the full Final Evaluation Report submitted to the CSDE June 30, 2010. This Final Report builds upon an earlier Interim Report, presented in September of 2009 that presented a picture of CALI implementation at the district level; this report examines CALI implementation at the school level, as well, and blends the two pictures into one comprehensive view.

CALI represents a major effort of the state education agency and high-need districts working together with key statewide partner agencies to bring about improvement through intensive support to the partner districts. This report enables CSDE and the entire collaboration to reflect on progress and be informed by lessons learned as it moves into work with additional supported districts. This evaluation is intended to highlight key issues in the CALI improvement model for consideration as the Initiative moves ahead.

This evaluation study is theory-driven. A Theory of Action, drawn from the original CALI design, provides the foundation for this evaluation, and includes the CALI mission and vision; inputs and resources; services, activities, and outputs; and short-, mid- and long-term outcomes that are expected. Data sources include interviews with CSDE, Regional Education Service Center (RESC) Alliance and the State Educational Resource Center staff, a web-based survey administered to district and school staff in all partner districts, a review of related documents, site visits to four districts, and then four schools, and additional interviews with External Consultants, Executive Coaches, Data Facilitators, and statewide Teacher Union representatives.

Analysis was designed to shed insight on how the components of CALI work together as a system, what changes in practice have been made at the district level as a result of the implementation of the CALI model; why and how CALI has been of benefit to districts and schools in improving teaching and learning; and what modifications CSDE might make to its Theory of Action to ultimately be more effective in working with districts to build capacity to support schools in need of improvement. The evaluation is guided by the following three questions.

***1. To what extent and degree of fidelity is CALI being implemented at the district and school level in partner districts?***

This first phase of the evaluation focused at the district level, where leaders have worked in earnest and made progress in reaching fidelity. The 15 partner districts are knowledgeable of CALI, buy in to the CALI model as a viable way to bring about school and district improvement, and have participated in CALI activities to a degree of depth. Some major components, such as the Cambridge Education reviews and the development and approval of District Improvement Plans were completed early on. It is fair to say that the state has been untiring in its efforts to implement CALI, and that the RESC Alliance and SERC and district leaders have stepped up to the plate in the spirit of partnership to work together. As one might expect, at the school level, examined during the second phase of the evaluation, knowledge of CALI, per se, buy-in to the model, and implementation of the vision in a daily, on-the-ground manner is a work in progress, with multiple variations on the theme, depending on local district demographics, policy making, and culture or personality. Also at various stages are the actual results achieved for student learning. RMC visited schools ranging from finding their way out of identification entirely to losing ground for meeting AYP in spite of diligent intention and effort. What is common is that all districts and schools visited have embraced District, School, and Instructional Data Teams to look collaboratively at student work and data in order to make sound decisions for students at all levels – perhaps the very heart of CALI.

Fidelity of implementation is extremely important at the school level simply because it is in the interactions of teachers and students in classrooms that improvement will ultimately happen or not. The partnership between districts and their schools in reaching fidelity in using data-driven improvement is the real arena of change, and the second phase of the evaluation sought to gather and report insights into how implementation occurs at this level.

**Commendations**

- CALI is well underway and partner districts are deep into implementing the Data Team work!
- CSDE has created strong partnerships for a solid foundation for the Statewide System of Support. The CSDE has worked in successful collaboration with its partners - the RESC SERC Alliance, the Connecticut Association of Schools (CAS), the professional statewide Teacher Unions, and their partner districts and schools - to create, adjust, and to support the CALI model, the necessary inputs, resources, supports and activities that have built such a foundation to the statewide Initiative.

- Quality assurance collaboration is in progress. The CSDE has established a Quality Assurance Workgroup to continue the work of the partnership described above to continue to improve upon the quality, communication, and accountability of the work of the partner districts.
- Data Showcases have provided networking opportunities. Five annual “Data Showcase” Conferences have convened partner and other district and school personnel for the purposes of exchanging best practices, networking, and learning.
- “Celebrating Stories of Success” celebrated the particular strengths and journeys of the “Fabulous 15” partner districts; the Commissioner and invited dignitaries joined in the evening celebration to honor the districts.
- Continuing to support the current cadre of Demonstration Schools rather than starting to support new schools is a wise decision, and will be greatly appreciated by the current group.

## **Recommendations**

RMC suggests that CSDE consider the following as it provides on-going support for implementing the CALI vision of practice. These recommendations focus on establishing implementation support that is intensive enough to take data use and instructional practices into the classroom level and sustain the work of the initiative.

- Continue to take steps to get maximum power from CSDE partner associations - the RESC Alliance and SERC, the CAS, the professional teacher associations, Connecticut Education Association (CEA) and the American Federation of Teachers Connecticut; continue to address issues of quality, consistency, timely participant access to professional development or modules, communication, and the transition to more embedded professional learning opportunities that will naturally follow the initial module design. Also important in this next phase is the attention to implementation fidelity and the science and research that is available to support that critical work.
- Provide guidance on human and fiscal resources to support reaching fidelity of implementation at the school and classroom levels; recognize that to bring this Initiative to scale will require immense resources from a variety of sources. Building district capacity to support schools in this work is critical.

### ***2. Do the components/interventions support each other? If so, how, and to what degree?***

The CALI components and interventions support one another in the model as designed. CALI is fundamentally a data-driven continuous improvement model: it started with use of the Cambridge Education reviews for districts (however received – well or not) to understand current status, write and implement aligned improvement plans, both at the district and school level, to address needs for improvement and build on strengths; then it makes data central at each

decision-making level from instructional teams up. As conceptualized, the CALI components and interventions are cohesive and coherent.

Districts are beginning to see CALI as a system, with interdependent and connecting components, although views do differ on this. Some feel that CALI is a coherent, cohesive program, and others do not. Most of the weight on on-going implementation will be carried by the training modules and by follow-up support received after participation in training.

While school principals see the larger view, as do district leaders, teachers tend to see what is on their plates – the Data Team work, and the necessary shifts in culture, strategy, and practice they need to make in order to change the learning trajectories for their students. Many are welcoming this new way of *doing school*, while others are continuing to struggle with change. Their view is also affected by the number of additional initiatives valued at their school, and how well they are aligned with CALI.

### **Commendations**

- Districts and schools have made it work! Either by strict adherence to the original design and theory, or through flexible use of resources and urgency, CALI districts and schools are making this work.
- CSDE has worked to consolidate CALI components. No new modules were added this year, and the Quality Assurance group has focused their work on Data Teams and SRBI as the backbone of CALI. CSDE has worked to create a message that other modules support the DDDM team work, and the work to provide instruction in regular classrooms.

### **Recommendations**

RMC offers the following recommendations on increasing cohesiveness and coherence of CALI.

- Think deeper, not broader and strengthen the integration of a few, powerful CALI components, rather than adding new services.
- Market a big CALI message to keep attention and focus on the what, how, and why of CALI.
- Demonstrate how data-driven decision-making works so improvement processes and results are visible and tangible.
- Celebrate successes to create momentum.
- Switch the orientation of CALI from state down to student up.
- Cast the nets to communities beyond education, and broaden the dialog beyond an education.

### ***3. What impact is CALI having on district, school, teacher, and student performance?***

This evaluation provides a lot of encouragement for what has been accomplished to date. Districts view CSDE staff as effective in creating and supporting the CALI model. Short-term outcomes have largely been accomplished, and work is active to achieve mid-term outcomes. Most of the partner districts and schools are in the thick of implementation, some with greater fidelity than others, some with greater student results than others. It is too soon to expect significant impact on performance or to investigate it in a rigorous way. This is a clear next step. There is anecdotal evidence of improvement in particular situations, and some schools are improving, which is encouraging.

#### **Commendations**

- The Commissioner, in addressing the partner schools at the spring 2010 CALI Celebration, confirmed his commitment to CALI and to the CALI schools. All Connecticut schools will become a part of the work, and no new initiatives will supersede continuing through with this important work of CALI.
- Clusters of CALI schools have made AYP. With CALI supports aligned with district and school initiatives, some schools have made AYP and are no longer in need of improvement. Schools are optimistic that the 2010 data will continue with this trend.
- The CSDE was open and reflective about the interim evaluation results, and made some critical changes and improvements as a result of that reception.

#### **Recommendations**

RMC offers the following recommendations regarding impact on district, school, teacher, and student performance:

- Stay the course, continue implementing this Initiative.
- Use TAST (Technical Assistance Service Tracking) and other sources of implementation data, to their fullest potential, in order to look more deeply into the connections between CALI participation and use with student achievement.
- Continue to evaluate, reflect upon, and make use of the data from the work of CALI as schools are in these critical implementation years.

CALI is a strong model for school and district improvement. It is likely that few states have created a statewide system of support that is as comprehensive, as well thought out, and as intensive in what it has done as CALI. But CSDE cannot rest on its laurels. The challenges of implementing and sustaining CALI at the classroom level, keeping and building the CALI focus are significant. All CSDE, RESC, SERC, and partner association members, partner district staff who participated in this evaluation expressed commitment, integrity and a lot of heart to meet

these challenges. RMC encourages the state to keep working together and not to give up or change course at this time.

## INTRODUCTION

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) has designed and undertaken implementation of a statewide system of support to improve its districts and schools. The support system is responsive both to Connecticut accountability legislation and to No Child Left Behind Title I, Section 1117 requirements for state support to schools and districts not making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). The statewide system of support is called the Connecticut Accountability for Learning Initiative (CALI). Because of the resources invested in CALI to date and its on-going development, the state contracted with RMC Research Corporation for an evaluation of the process thus far.

Like all states, Connecticut now has a number of schools and districts that have been identified under state and federal accountability as not making AYP. The number of such schools increases every year as AYP targets go up and many schools progress into more serious stages of identification. CSDE made a strategic decision to concentrate its support provided through CALI, first on 12 partner districts, then expanded to 15. All of these districts are identified for improvement at the district level and are in Year 3 or greater for the performance of all students (not just subgroups). Although CALI development continues to reach a wider set of schools, the evaluation focuses on the partner districts, as they have received the most intensive support from the state.

### History of CALI

Accountability was moved to the top of Connecticut's agenda about three years ago with two fundamental changes: (1) passage of state accountability legislation that set expectations, provided funding, and defined sanctions; and (2) the appointment of Mark K. McQuillan as State Commissioner. Together, these provided new structure and new energy and created momentum for the state playing an active role in supporting districts with identified schools. The development of CALI is outlined briefly below:

- **Early work with Doug Reeves and the Leadership and Learning Center:** In 2004, the CSDE School Improvement Unit began work with Doug Reeves in a smaller, more contained, effort also called CALI. Even though the statewide system of support has grown to include many more elements, it is this early work with Reeves that provided the beginnings of what CALI has become. First, Reeves' work is essentially a data-driven improvement model that aligns use of data at the instructional team level with the school level and then with the district level. This approach is still at the heart of the CALI services. Second, early work contained the idea of building local capacity for providing training in the future, rather than relying entirely on external providers working on a contract basis at high expense. This idea is also still prominent in CALI and the transition from external providers to building local district capacity and using the state regional technical assistance systems is seen in several CALI components.
- **Definition of a target audience:** Who CALI serves has evolved over time and continues to evolve. CALI services began with 12 partner districts, and then added three more for the current 15. At the next level of service, there are "supported districts," which are

identified for improvement at the district level for subgroup performance and for whom some of the original services are modified. Although it is hoped that CALI will be a resource for all districts and schools, the supported districts have received less intensive support than the partner districts and for that reason are not included in the scope of the evaluation.

- **Demonstration Schools:** In summer of 2007, CSDE began work to establish Demonstration Schools in the then 12 partner districts. The rationale was that since the state legislature has provided funding, it will want to know that the investment has the potential to pay off. Therefore, one school in each of the 12 partner districts was selected to be a Demonstration School. The state partnered with the Connecticut Association of Schools to provide coaches for school administrators and also hired Data Team Facilitators, and used funds for stipends for teachers to participate in improvement work. Coaches began work in January of 2008. Five of the 12 schools made AYP or safe harbor in 2008 testing. In SY 08-09, Demonstration Schools were expanded in partner districts and extended to Supported Districts for a total of 39 Demonstration Schools plus 20 Coach Only Schools as of the writing of this report<sup>1</sup>. As of 2009 state testing, Demonstration Schools in three districts were removed from In Need of Improvement Status. An additional nine Demonstration Schools in partner or supported districts made Safe Harbor or AYP, providing evidence of efficacy of the CALI model in the Demonstration Schools.
- **Reviews by Cambridge Education, LLC.** State accountability established a three-part structure for school/district improvement. First, districts and schools needing improvement undergo a review process that functions as a needs assessment identifying critical elements where work is needed. Second, the district uses findings to write an improvement plan. Third, the plan is implemented and results are monitored in an on-going fashion. CSDE began by contracting with the Cambridge Education LLC, an external review organization widely recognized for its quality. Between September and December of 2008, 12 districts and 63 schools were reviewed. The Cambridge review process was conducted in a transparent manner and brought an unprecedented level of communication involving local boards of education that had to define their role in acting on findings, and the state board of education, to whom revised district improvement plans were presented. In order to move from review findings to district plan revision and monitoring, CSDE assigned teams to districts to provide support to superintendents and the District Data Teams. From the beginning, the intention has been to establish a structure through the Cambridge Education LLC reviews and then move to other ways of fulfilling the requirement for an initial review. For example, the seven supported districts are using a self assessment process developed by the Center for Educational Leadership and Technology and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CELTC/CCSSO).
- **Development of a service structure:** Ongoing professional development and technical assistance for CALI implementation is provided through a series of **training modules** and state consultation services. CSDE and the RESC Alliance and SERC together form the

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<sup>1</sup> Four schools originally participating were no longer Demonstration or Coach Only schools in 2009.

delivery system for this on-going support. CSDE provides **support teams**, who are assigned to partner districts to work at the district level and **External Consultants**, who provide support at the superintendent level. On-going support is intended to help districts implement their improvement plans, build their capacity to use data for continuous improvement and build their capacity to effectively support their schools.

- **Internal state structures.** CALI is a new way of enabling CSDE to be an active supporter of districts and it has demanded new ways of operating within the state agency. Notably, CALI has been a cross-bureau effort with involvement of School Improvement, Accountability, and Curriculum. In addition, new structures such as an Advisory Group with representation of each partner district have emerged.

### CALI Partner Districts

Because the 15 partner districts are the focus of the evaluation, it is important to begin with a general description of them. As districts in year three or higher of improvement, they are the districts with the greatest needs. Ultimately, the level of need in these districts is the underlying rationale for CALI. The characteristics of partner districts below were created with data from the district profiles and other information on the CSDE website.<sup>2</sup>

- **Low student achievement:** Performance on the state assessments--Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) for grades three through eight and Connecticut Academic Performance Tests (CAPT) for grade 10-- in the 15 partner districts was below the statewide average. The tables in Appendix A show the percentage of students meeting the performance targets in 2008 in each partner district for each assessment. Percent proficient in partner districts is compared to state performance levels. On the 4th grade Mathematics CMT and 5th grade Reading CMT, one of the 15 districts had a higher percentage of students meeting the proficiency target than that of the state. On the 5th grade mathematics CMT there were two districts that surpassed the state level. On all other assessments, all districts performed below the state level. For the CAPT, all partner districts were below the state level on reading, writing, math, and science assessments. Percentages of students meeting the proficiency target or better were as low as 0.0% for reading, 4.8% for writing, 10.3% for mathematics, and 8.3% for science. See table in Appendix B for district breakdowns.
- **Low graduation rates.** Graduation rates in the 15 partner districts were between 33.3% and 97.3%. Two partner districts had graduation rates higher than the state level (92.6%).
- **Low socio-economic status:** Populations in partner districts generally have lower socio-economic status than in the rest of the state. In 2000, the per capita income in Connecticut was \$28,766. The range of per capita income levels in the 15 CALI districts was between \$13,428 and \$34,987. Only two partner districts are located in areas where per capita incomes are above the state level. Student Free and Reduced Meals (FRM) data from 2007-08 also revealed that the 15 districts had higher poverty levels than most districts in

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<sup>2</sup> Data from the district profiles was taken from <http://www.csde.state.ct.us/public/der/ssp/dist0708/district.htm> on 7/16/09. Information on statewide percentages were downloaded from <http://www.csde.state.ct.us/public/cedar/edfacts/enrollment/public.htm> on 7/17/09

Connecticut. Statewide, 28.7% of students are eligible for FRM. In partner districts, the percentage of students eligible for FRM ranges between 29.7% and greater than 95.0%.

- **High minority populations.** The minority student population in the 15 partner districts is larger than the state average. The percentage of minority students statewide is 34.8, while it ranges from 43.9% to 91.0% in the partner districts. Statewide, the largest minority in the student population is Hispanics (16.6%), followed by African Americans (13.9%). This is reflected in the partner districts, with percentage of Hispanic students ranging from 12.5% to 52.1% and African American students ranging from 5.9% to 50.8%. Of the 15 partner districts, one had a lower percentage of Hispanic students than the statewide average (16.6%), and three had a lower percentage of African American students than the state average (13.9%).
- **Lack of minority staff.** In each of the district profile reports, a section describes how the district provides students opportunities to interact with students and teachers from different ethnic and economic background. One concern listed in several profiles is the need for more professional role models from a minority background. An indicator for this is the percent of minority professional staff, which ranged from 3.6% to 30.3% in the 15 partner districts. Statewide, 7.7% of teachers are minorities, indicating that some partner districts are performing better than average in this category, although even in best cases the percentage of minority staff may not be proportionate to the percentage of minorities in the student body.
- **High limited English proficient population.** In school year 2007-08, 5.4% of K-12 students were not fluent in English in Connecticut schools. In the 15 partner districts between 2.8% and 22.0% of the students were not fluent in English.
- **High number of identified schools:** As of school year 2007-08, the 15 CALI districts had a total of 194 schools identified as “In Need of Improvement.” Each district had between 33% and 100% of their schools identified. Seven of the 15 districts had 75% or more of their schools identified. These 194 schools have been in improvement for anywhere between one and eight years.
- **More elementary than secondary schools.** Of the 194 identified schools, 89 (45.9%) are Elementary Schools (defined as serving up to grade 6), 41 (21.1%) are Elementary and Middle Schools combined (defined as serving student up through grades 7 or 8), 33 (17.0%) are Middle Schools, and 31 (16.0%) are High Schools.
- **Varying student enrollments:** The size of the student population in the 15 partner districts varied, with enrollment ranging from 2,733 to 22,360 students. The 5-year enrollment change indicated that, in general, the student enrollment is decreasing. Nine out of the 15 districts have decreasing enrollment. These 5-year enrollment change statistics range from -10.3% to -5.5%.

## **Purpose of the Evaluation**

CALI represents a major effort of the state education agency and high-need districts working together to bring about improvement. An evaluation study is timely; intensive support to the partner districts has been provided. CALI has continued to grow during the period that the evaluation was underway (January 2009- June 2010) and it will continue to evolve. At the time of the writing of this report, much has been accomplished, but refinements are still being made. In the spirit of data driven continuous improvement, now is an opportune moment for CSDE and the partner districts to reflect on progress and be informed by lessons learned as CALI moves into work with supported districts and eventually, others. We hope that the findings presented in this report are useful to education leaders in Connecticut as they move ahead in improving student outcomes.

## **METHODS**

This section of the report describes the methods that were used in conducting the evaluation. The evaluation questions, evaluation design, and data collection and analysis methods are described.

### **Evaluation Questions**

The key questions for the evaluation are:

- To what extent and degree of fidelity is CALI being implemented at the district and school levels in districts identified as in need of improvement, corrective action, or restructuring under NCLB?
- Do the components/interventions support each other? If so, how and to what degree?
- What impact is CALI having on district, school, teacher, and student performance?

### **Evaluation Design**

The CALI evaluation is guided by a Theory of Action. Prior to the evaluation, CSDE had done initial work on a Theory of Action for the Initiative. RMC confirmed and further specified it through an initial series of interviews with state staff (see CALI Theory of Action in Appendix C). Standard component parts of a Theory of Action are: inputs; outputs; short-term outcomes; mid-term outcomes and long-term outcomes, and the findings section of the report is organized around these categories.

The stages of the Theory of Action allow us to look at CALI from different perspectives. For example:

- The inputs component of the Theory of Action identifies the key building blocks that must be in place to implement and sustain CALI services.
- The outputs component of the Theory of Action investigates what CALI services have been provided
- The short term outcomes component of the Theory of Action explores if districts are knowledgeable of CALI services and see them as a valuable and potentially effective way to go about school improvement.
- The mid-term outcomes component of the Theory of Action discusses factors that related to helping schools to reach fidelity of implementation of the data-driven practices that CALI envisions.
- The long-term outcomes component of the Theory of Action addresses whether ultimately results in increased student achievement and other such indicators have been achieved.

The value of using the Theory of Action as a framework for the evaluation design is that it provides an organizer for information that is gathered. Within each component of the Theory of Action, there are data that explain how CALI is being implemented and what it is achieving. It provides a rich source of information for answering the over-arching evaluation questions, helps to pinpoint where improvements are needed, and can be used as a basis for dialog with stakeholders such as district leaders and RESC Alliance and SERC members.

The evaluation was implemented in two phases: a district level study and a school level study. For each phase of the evaluation, four districts (or schools) were selected according to a range of factors so that they were representative, to the degree possible, of partner districts or schools within them. Two evaluation reports were produced: an Interim Report and a Final Report. The Interim Report focused on data collected during the district phase of the study. The Final Evaluation Report incorporated school level findings into the structure established by Interim Report, expanding understanding and providing insights from on the ground practice. The Interim Report should be thought of as a partial picture of the implementation of the CALI Theory of Action, and the Final Report, delivered to CSDE in June 2010, as the more complete picture.

The evaluation design is ethnographic. Districts and schools were examined for cross-cutting themes within the Theory of Action. The advantages of an ethnographic design are that it can:

- Describe an intervention in a real life context (e.g., how CALI services or activities interact with each other or other improvement initiatives in an education system);
- Explain causal links or systemic aspects of interventions that are too complex for survey or experimental strategies (e.g., explain why CALI services were or were not implemented to a high level and describe the mechanism that links CALI services to student gain); and
- Explore situations in which the intervention has no clear set of outcomes (explain why a high level of implementation of CALI may not have led to student gains or why CALI was implemented at a low level).

The evaluation was carried out in order to inform CSDE about what they have accomplished to date and what next steps are. It is not an evaluation of specific districts or schools and how they have performed in implementing CALI. Therefore, in order to maintain anonymity of districts and schools, data at the district and school levels are presented as a composite, organized by the Theory of Action.

## Data Collection and Analysis

Similar data collection and analysis procedures are used for the district and school-level phases of the evaluation design.

- **Web-based surveys.** RMC designed and administered web-based surveys addressing CALI implementation at the district and school levels. The surveys were constructed to reflect the components of the CALI Theory of Action. Items measured on a four-point Likert scale (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, and Strongly Agree) plus a Don't Know/NA option and free-response items.

For the district level survey (conducted in April of 2009), the twenty-four members of the CALI Advisory Group representing the 15 partner districts were invited to respond. Follow-up emails and phone calls were conducted to increase response rate. A total of 18 responses were received, for an overall return rate of 75%. However, 100% of the partner districts submitted at least one response. Two districts had multiple respondents. Responses were gathered and analyses of central tendency and range of responses informed the level of agreement with different items.

There were two purposes for the district survey. First, the survey informed RMC about level of implementation at the district level so this information could be used as one criterion in selecting districts to participate in an on-site visit. Second, the survey also served the purpose of providing a big picture of the perceptions of all 15 partner districts, which can serve as a backdrop to the more detailed information collected at the site visits. The small number of respondents from each district limits the strength of conclusions that can be drawn regarding this purpose. Although reliable information was collected, the small number of responses restricted the types of statistical analyses that could be performed; any discussion in findings is entirely descriptive and should not be over-interpreted.

Using a parallel survey format, administration, and analysis procedures, RMC conducted a school survey in fall of 2009. RMC sent an electronic link to the school survey via the district offices to principals of the 194 schools in Identified for Improvement status. Principals were given discretion in involving their School or Instructional Data Team Members. Ninety-two schools provided 242 responses, an acceptable response rate for the analyses conducted.

- **Focus groups/interviews.** Qualitative data collection and analysis is the primary method used in this evaluation.

Focus groups and interviews began with a visit to CSDE January 7-8, 2009, at which interviews of CALI leadership and representatives of each CALI component were conducted to develop an initial understanding of how CALI developed, what it consists of, and how the state is going about implementation. These interviews were followed with a series of telephone interviews of each RESC and the SERC to gain an understanding of their role in CALI and related perceptions.

Next, site visits were conducted in four districts in spring 2009 (see Appendix D for schedule and protocol). Districts were selected for site visits using a range of factors. Three districts from the original group of 12 and one from the three later additions to partner districts were selected; level of CALI implementation according to the survey, range of types/size of district, of RESC provider, geographic location, and willingness of the district were also taken into account in selecting districts for site visits.

In general, the procedure for collecting and analyzing focus group data was as follows. Interviews were audio-recorded and the transcripts were produced by Transcription Plus, a Connecticut woman-owned small business. RMC staff entered the transcripts in to *The Ethnograph*, software for qualitative data analysis. Project staff coded the interviews by descriptive and analytic themes, writing reflective memos throughout the process.

In the winter of 2010, RMC conducted a similar process, visiting four schools that were selected based on: level of CALI implementation, progress in making AYP, variety in district, geographic location, and discretion of state or district staff.

- **Document review.** At the initial visit to CSDE, state staff introduced RMC to a number of documents related to CALI and provided these electronically or in hard copy following the meeting. Materials reviewed included: Cambridge Education review findings, District Improvement Plans, Modules and evaluation of modules; evaluation of the Demonstration Schools programs and other materials related to the development and implementation of CALI. RMC continued to collect documents of interest as they came up in conversation with districts or schools during site visits.
- **Additional opportunities for data gathering.** To round out the data collection designed to include surveys, focus groups and site visits, and document reviews, the RMC Evaluation Team was able to interview several “key respondents” including CAS External Consultants and Executive Coaches, RESC Data Team Facilitators, and CEA and AFT statewide representatives. Finally, we had the pleasure of participating in, observing, and conducting short on the spot interviews and member checks at the CSDE’s “5<sup>th</sup> Annual Data Showcase” in April, 2010, as well as the very special “Celebrating Stories of Success” honoring the 15 Partner Districts sponsored by CAS and EASTCONN.

## FINDINGS

This section of the report is organized according to the CALI Theory of Action; see Appendix C for full detail, and the list of components below for a brief organizer.

- **CALI Mission:** To develop and offer a model of state support to districts and schools to support the process of continuous school and district improvement.
- **CALI Vision:** If the state support model assists a school district in strengthening and aligning its organizational systems over time, particularly those systems closest to the instructional core at the school level<sup>3</sup>, then student learning will increase incrementally and notably improve, with reasonable probability that such improvement will be sustained.
- **Inputs and Resources:** The foundational elements that must be in place for CALI to succeed.
- **CALI Services, Activities, and Outputs:** The accessibility of CALI supports and services and the extent to which they have been provided.
- **Short-term Outcomes:** The degree to which districts and schools are aware of CALI, have knowledge of it, and have bought into its potential for change.
- **Mid-term Outcomes:** Changed practices at the district and school levels with regard to using data for improvement; leading indicators that implementation is reaching fidelity and that organizational culture is changing.
- **Long-term Outcomes:** Lagging indicators of increased student achievement, decreased drop out rates and other common measures of success.

The report will address each component in turn, providing a summary of findings, combining data from the surveys, interviews with CSDE staff, RESC and SERC Alliance members, Connecticut Association of Schools (CAS), statewide union representatives, and from district and school site visits. Each section will begin with a bulleted list of summary statements, referencing the detail in each section of the Theory of Action. Following this summary, there is an expanded discussion of the most critical factors that emerged in the combined district and school analysis.

A Theory of Action is a useful tool in examining a complex process like CALI because it breaks the initiative down into parts and makes the intermediate stages explicit. The components of the Theory of Action generally build on each other, i.e., it is likely that long-term outcomes will not be reached unless any significant issues in earlier stages have been identified and addressed. Therefore, the evaluation will identify what has been accomplished and what challenges seem to exist in each area, and in broader, key areas that cut across the various components. This level of

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<sup>3</sup> Systems at the instructional core with greatest impact on teaching and learning at the school level are human resources, acquisition/support, curriculum, instruction, assessment, supervision/evaluation, professional development, and school improvement planning/implementation.

specificity will permit dialog and modifications to the CALI model by those who have a stake in its success: CSDE leaders; district and school leaders; RESC Alliance and SERC leaders, and others. This evaluation report is meant to spur thinking, raise provocative issues, and further the interest and momentum that CALI has already created.

Participants in interviews and site visits appreciated seeing the CALI Theory of Action, constructed by the evaluation team, drawn from the logic model and essential CALI project documents. They saw the graphic as careful articulation in a retrospective and cohesive picture. *All in one place!* Seeing the Theory of Action confirmed the progress that they have made. District and school leaders who were interviewed in site visits saw themselves largely in mid implementation, and that affirmed for them how far they had come.

The one page visual representation of the CALI Theory of Action resonated more with district leadership and school principals than with teachers. District and school leaders had more experience participating at the state and district levels, understanding the logic of the overarching initiative and its essential components. Only at one of the four schools did the one pager actually look familiar or represent for school personnel what they knew to be “CALI.” However, at all four schools, with or without the actual Theory of Action sheet, walking through the essential and more relevant components of the model made absolutely clear and comfortable sense to them. Teachers were far more knowledgeable and invested in the actual implementation of the Data Team work than they were in the overarching view of the model, and some of its organizing and foundational components. At schools, though, the principals did have the larger view.

### **Theory of Action: The CALI Mission and Vision**

**Key components of the mission and vision of CALI:** As seen in implementation at the district and state levels, CALI in practice with fidelity is:

- Strong leadership at all levels, with a sense of urgency for change
- Human and fiscal resources, in the form of grant funding, consultative support, and training opportunities
- Professional learning and development opportunities, in the form of modules and embedded supports
- Demonstration schools with enhanced supports and expectations for accountability
- Needs based improvement plans, based on external district and school assessments
- Nested systems of Data Teams, at district, school, and instructional team levels.

Resulting in:

- An emerging statewide system of support with capacity to provide the right resources and supports at the right time with appropriate partners for districts and schools
- School culture changes such that all adults hold high expectations for all students to learn and achieve at very high levels
- Educators looking at student work to inform instructional practice, and using data at all levels to make decisions for student learning
- Increased capacity to lead from the ground up (rather than top down)
- Increased student engagement, learning, achievement, and success, seen from multiple forms of evidence
- Continuing and increased funding, and embedded supports for implementation

At the school and district levels, data driven improvement is understood well conceptually; however there remains a need to provide focused, intensive support on the core practices that are the mechanism that drives improvement. Most of the districts and schools are steeped in the middle stage of implementation of CALI, and experiencing many of the mid-term outcomes as outlined in the Theory of Action.

### **Theory of Action: CALI Inputs and Resources**

#### **Overview of Findings Related to the Theory of Action**

The first component of the Theory of Action is inputs and resources, the critical foundations that must be in place for CALI to have a chance at succeeding. These include the various parts of the conceptual design of CALI that are adequate to produce change if implemented well. Inputs and resources at the initial start-up were sufficient to bring about early implementation of CALI at the local level. These need to continue in order to reach greater fidelity of CALI implementation and to support ongoing sustainability of this work. In many ways, CALI has created district capacity to support schools to implement data driven improvement of student learning. Below is a brief point-by-point summary of the findings on detail found in the Theory of Action, Inputs and Resources.

- **Funding is sufficient to support CALI services:** Experienced leaders understand that what has been done with CALI so far has moved them from the tip of the iceberg to a fairly good sized chunk of the iceberg. While they appreciate the increased human, fiscal, and programmatic support for this imperative work, and recognize that they would not have come as far as they have without CALI, they also realize that there is much more work to be done, the needs are immense, this takes time, and this fiscal support will need to increase exponentially as it progresses in order to reach the vision. They are worried

about the feasibility and sustainability, given the current economy. This deep concern was heard both at the district and at the school building levels.

- **CALI service providers are qualified and comfortable with their own role in providing services and have sufficient time to perform it:** District and school personnel have benefitted from and continue to appreciate the array of service providers who make up the CALI model landscape: state support team members who understand the big picture, External Consultants who bring their own experiences to the table, Executive Coaches who continue to work closely with school leadership to translate urgency into action, Data Team Facilitators modeling the intended practices of the deep work of CALI, and module training cadres from national training organizations and from the RESC Alliance and SERC providing the professional learning opportunities that are foundational to implementation. All of these professionals played and continue to play critical roles that frame CALI. More data will be presented as specific service provider sets enter into the discussion of components.
- **The state has adequate management procedures in place:** The state has created management structures and procedures to support CALI in many ways, in terms of staffing, funding, communication, and its own accountability. Also, CSDE has been open and flexible in continuing to evaluate and change these procedures in order to respond to both its own needs for reorganization and local needs for implementation.
- **CALI design is appropriate and has sufficient power to bring about district and school improvement:** There is a shared belief that the CALI model is theoretically strong. District and school level data support that the design of CALI forms an adequate basis for Connecticut’s statewide system of support. It is based in the literature. Perceptions from both district and school leaders generally indicate that the CALI design has the potential to address the mission and vision stated in the Theory of Action. CSDE is aware of the “building it while flying it” aspect of early roll out, the perception that it was not all together in the beginning, and managed the perceived sense of ambiguity well. The model will continue to require adjustments and reinvestments as implementation continues to roll out over time.
- **CALI services can be flexibly used based on need:** Some CALI districts and schools are in the process of implementing CALI and its multiple components, as designed and branded, with intentional fidelity. Other districts and schools have been able to implement the essence of CALI while tailoring the particular services and activities to their own local needs and culture. As the change mechanism at the district and school levels is seen as a series of nested data driven improvement teams - a district team, school teams, and instructional (grade level or content area) teams - and decision making informed by data - services and activities are flexibly used, whether “CALI branded” or not. Short vignettes of CALI implementation will portray examples of this later in the report.
- **Services are designed to support each other as a system:** The services are designed to support one another, and in fact, do support one another, as viewed by most. Also, CALI services can be and have been aligned with services from earlier or newer state and local

initiatives outside of CALI, such as Positive Behavior Supports (PBS) and Professional Learning Communities (PLC's.) Districts and schools that have been successful at aligning multiple initiatives rather than isolating or competing various work intended to support students, have reported greater outcomes and local assessment results from their streamlining.

## **Theory of Action: CALI Services, Activities, and Outputs**

### **Overview of Findings Related to the Theory of Action**

This component of the Theory of Action deals with the extent to which CALI services are accessible and whether or not the partner districts participated in them to a sufficient degree that short-term outcomes can reasonably be expected. It is again useful to look at the services in broad categories, as they vary in terms of whether they are one time or ongoing and in terms of the complexity of the data that would indicate an adequate level of effort. CALI has produced these outputs to a high level: school and district reviews were conducted; module trainings were designed, implemented, and accessed; and state teams, consultants, coaches and facilitators were provided to support the initiation of these services and activities.

- **State support team assigned to partner districts:** CSDE leaders reported that this technical assistance was provided in sufficient quantities to achieve intended goals in building district capacity during early implementation. Support teams met with their districts at least monthly, participating in District Data Teams, and some, more frequently. Frequency of contact was determined by district need; it was expected that as district capacity was built, frequency of interaction with CSDE support teams would be reduced. The issue of adequate numbers of staff to play these roles surfaced, and has been reduced over time due to both availability of CSDE staff and district need. In early implementation, greater numbers of CSDE personnel were involved in Support Teams, partly to build CSDE capacity, as well as local capacity. Site visit data revealed that this assistance was and is valued. Local leaders have benefited from as much assistance as has been possible to provide. Survey data showed some districts beyond the four visited were less satisfied with their CSDE support teams, citing changes in support team membership, inconsistent messages from team members, or mismatch with the staff assigned.
- **Training modules (DDDM/DT, ETS, CFA, MSW, School Climate, SRBI, ELL):** The Module Training was seen as the meat and potatoes of CALI as implementation began and grew, in that these professional development experiences are the gateway to CALI and the “what, why, how” of implementation. Largely, participants described the modules as rich and foundational to their big work to follow. Several themes regarding Module Training emerged over time, and are explored more deeply later in the findings.
- **District and school status (Cambridge) reviews:** Because these were required elements with well specified steps and stages, all 15 partner districts and their schools participated in the Cambridge review process and received their reports. The Cambridge Education reviews were viewed, by and large, as a wake up call. They were seen as *tough*

*love*, taking too long, delivered in a manner sometimes seen as insensitive to school communities, but “spot on” accurate. Some local leaders experienced a much smoother and more positive experience with the process. However hated or popular, they clearly contributed to the sense of urgency. Again, this summarizes both district and school perceptions.

- **Demonstration Schools (including Executive Coaching and Data Team Facilitation):** Leaders of Demonstration Schools value their Executive Coaches, Data Team Facilitators, and additional funding a great deal. Demonstration Schools were originally designed to be funded for two year periods. The program has been supported now for three years, and is in the second full year of implementation. The Demonstration Schools are designed to model what CALI looks like in action, practice, and raising student achievement. Demonstration school resources are coveted by non-Demonstration Schools, and the two year period is seen as insufficient for intended results.
- **External Consultants that specialize in the role of superintendents:** CSDE leaders reported that this technical assistance has been provided in sufficient quantities to achieve intended goals in building district capacity. With regard to External Consultants, each serves five districts, and they do not have other responsibilities within the SEA. These were perceived as highly effective. Partner districts visited greatly appreciated the support from External Consultants, who are retired superintendents. They valued the rich experience these consultants brought to bear on CALI work and found much of their advice “just in time” and on target. One leader particularly noted that s/he valued the External Consultant’s willingness to discuss their own mistakes made in the superintendent role and to bring that wisdom to bear on challenges current leaders face in implementing CALI. This trio of consultants is referred to as the true *Rock Stars* of the CALI initiative.
- **Connecticut State Board of Education (CSBE) Ad Hoc Committee on Accountability:** The CSBE’s Ad Hoc Committee on Accountability played an impressive role in developing a Five Year Comprehensive Plan for Education 2006 – 2011, creating policy and allocating funding to respond to state legislation demanding the establishment of an accountability system regarding education in Connecticut. It has been the CSDE’s job to report to this Ad Hoc Committee in an ongoing fashion.
- **District improvement plan approval by CSBE:** This was also a required element of CALI initiation with well specified steps and stages, and all 15 partner districts participated in the review process and in the writing and approval of improvement plans based upon the reviews. The District Improvement Plans seem to hold varying weight in terms of backbone and dynamic quality for CALI work across these districts. Creating the plans played a major role, and a time consuming one, as well, during the initial stages of the District Data Teams. The same scenario played out at the school level with school Data Teams and school improvement planning.

- **Advisory committees of partner districts:** The Advisory Committee is a major source of networking and collegiality for the CALI point people at partner districts. Only one district indicated on its survey that it is of questionable value.
- **Subject-area curriculum and instruction support:** Curriculum and instructional support was intended to be part of a “three legged stool” of bureau supports for CALI; this was perceived to be the softest of the three legs. Department restructuring, retirements and new staff assignments have brought new promise and strength to this much needed component of CALI work.
- **Paraprofessional capacity building:** The CALI Paraprofessional Overview Module is intended to build the capacity of paraprofessionals to contribute to the work of CALI. It is one of the newer modules developed, and was less familiar to many of the local leaders, in terms of CALI support. One district leader seemed to be hearing about the module for the first time. They are eager to learn more. As challenging as it is to get teachers out of the classroom during school time, it is more so for paraprofessionals. Newer webinars and topical papers are being developed and offered on site for these staff.
- **Partners in capacity building (including the Regional Educational Service Centers and the State Education Resource Center):** The RESC Alliance and SERC played a critical role in the overall CALI design and in the early stages of implementation. They were key technical assistance providers, module trainers, and support service providers to partner districts. They continue to provide the training, additional professional development, beyond the module training, and support for Demonstration Schools, as well. Members of the Alliance have generally had a very positive and collaborative relationship with one another; they are each independent, private, not for profit corporations in their own right, along with their own histories, areas of strength, leadership, and member districts. In general they serve the school districts within their catchment area; however, for CALI, they work with greater flexibility and work beyond their traditional regional boundaries, in order to best serve the needs of the districts. While district leadership described some of the work the Alliance members were providing to be useful, helpful, and generally positive, much of the testimony was fairly critical and constructive. Most positive was the praise for Data Team Facilitators assigned to Demonstration Schools, who work at the RESC’s. District leaders were particularly concerned about the quality and availability of the Module Training.

### **Theory of Action: Short-term Outcomes**

#### **Overview of Findings Related to the Theory of Action**

Short-term outcomes in the Theory of Action focus on whether the inputs for CALI and participation in services were adequate to create an understanding of CALI and its goals and purposes; garner buy-in to CALI as a workable system; and create a sense of urgency to move ahead in order to meet the CALI vision and mission. Certainly these outcomes were observed in full bloom at the district level in most of the 15 partner districts, especially the four visited.

Awareness seems to have penetrated more fully at the district level; district outcomes at this level would be expected to be ahead of school outcomes because implementation of the core improvement mechanism is more complicated and challenging at the school and classroom levels. CALI essentially flows from the state to the district to the school, with a commensurate movement from conceptual framework to application.

This section begins with summary statements on the detail on short-term outcomes in the Theory of Action and then goes on with analytic discussion of some of the key themes that emerged from the data.

- **Local educators understand the goals and purposes of CALI:** Understanding of CALI's goals and purposes was very high at the district leadership and principal levels. Classroom teachers' understandings of actual CALI components spanned from very familiar to unfamiliar, often depending on the nature of CALI implementation at the district level and the communication from the district offices to schools. Understanding of Data Team work was very high at all levels.
- **Local educators are aware of CALI services and resources.** The district and school leadership were somewhat more aware than classroom teachers. The big picture was clearer from and at the top, but awareness of resources for Data Team work was clear at all levels.
- **Local educators easily access CALI services and resources:** The same is also true here. At some schools, and for some districts, depending on the nature of implementation and tenure in CALI, access to services and resources was easy, uncomplicated, and equitable. For others familiar with the CALI offerings, availability to some services and resources proved more challenging. Some reported that modules were not always easy to access in a timely manner, and that the quality and quantity of offerings was uneven. These issues are being addressed by the Quality Assurance work. For yet others in schools where districts developed their own professional development, access to some CALI services, modules, for example, did not exist. It is important to note that this is a district issue, not a state one. The state has made the modules available. In one or two cases, districts have their teachers participate in locally provided trainings, and have not supported their participation in statewide CALI offerings.
- **Local educators agree that CALI services and resources have the potential to make a difference in student outcomes:** Local educators report with wide agreement that implementing Data Teams, putting students and their work in the center of the dialog to improve practice will most certainly result in better learning opportunities and higher achievement for students. At the district level, most leaders are extremely appreciative for the role CALI services and resources have played to that end and at the districts and schools visited, teachers are by and large excited about the changes and hopeful for their potential.
- **The Connecticut Accountability Legislation and the Cambridge Education, LLC Reviews have created a sense of urgency for improving schools:** Where there was

already a sense of importance and priority, the newer Accountability Legislation, the Cambridge reviews, and public statewide test results and rankings have certainly created a sense of urgency. Respondents at all levels of the system reported this sense of increased accountability. Such urgency opened the door for a willingness to engage in new work. Under different or former circumstances, there might have been more resistance and less buy in to this ambitious initiative.

- **Local educators are willing to take responsibility for implementing CALI with fidelity:** We saw district and school leadership most willing to take responsibility for implementing CALI, and implementing with increasing fidelity is a priority for many at this time. We were impressed by a group of leaders wanting the very best for all of their students, and wanting to navigate very carefully, intelligently, and swiftly to engage in this work. All CALI districts and schools visited are implementing Data Teams, working toward increasing fidelity, and most are accessing the specific components of CALI.

Short-term outcomes are a critical building block for effective implementation and changed school practice and culture. As such, they merit more discussion in order to explicate how short term outcomes play out at the district and school levels.

### **Knowledge and Understanding of CALI**

An “understanding” of CALI can be defined in several ways. At the most basic level, it may mean knowledge of the purpose, goals, and components of CALI. In a finer grained way, it can refer to understanding of each of the CALI components. At a more sophisticated level, it can refer to an understanding of what CALI means as implemented as a mechanism for change and what it takes to build the district supports that will make changes at the school level possible.

Overall, it seems that a high level of awareness of CALI has been established, certainly at the district level, and at the school level, at least in some schools. In the four district offices that received site visits, CALI was described as a “household word,” and it was clear that members of the District Data Teams were very familiar with CALI purposes and services. As would be expected, understanding of CALI has grown over time. As one District Data Team member expressed it:

*I think I would just say a few years ago things were more nebulous and data driven decision making was a term, and we were sort of getting to it but nobody was really focused on it. You know? Within the last year especially it just seems like things are really coming in place.*

Principals and other school-based members of District Data Teams understand well what CALI is, as well as the potential fruits of their labor from participation. During school site visits, the principals certainly understood CALI, its purpose, goals, components, a deep understanding of the power of CALI, and largely, some of what it would take to implement the work with fidelity. Teachers in the four schools visited were less aware of the big picture of CALI and all of its various components, but showed increasing though varied understandings of how a student data driven focus of decision making, planning, and changing culture and practice has the power to affect student learning and achievement. They all participate in School Data Teams and use

student work and assessment data to inform instruction. That is a major shift from past practice for most everyone.

### **Buy-in to CALI**

Buy-in can be defined as the belief that CALI has value and as a willingness to engage and interact in CALI services. In other words, taking ownership of CALI is a key short-term outcome.

District survey findings were largely positive, and the districts interviewed during site visits expressed a very high level of buy-in for CALI, reporting that CALI is central to the conversation about instructional change. At all four districts, a resounding theme of appreciation for CALI and how CALI is impacting district and school work was heard.

Throughout the site visit process and on the surveys, much feedback on each CALI component was expressed, from appreciative to formative. Data Team members in the four districts visited either had a positive perception of CALI components or engaged in thinking about improvements they would like to see made.

During the school visits, teachers were less aware of the actual CALI Theory of Action, and the various and specific components. They do buy in to the team data based decision making and professional learning, to a very large degree, and they clearly do see this as the right thing to be doing for students. They are truly building critical mass for this new way of doing business, and this new culture of teaching and learning is driving change with a clear sense of urgency.

As respondents at the district level expressed varying levels of “push back” from their professional staff, there was no desire to stop the work entirely; only to recognize their constituents’ requests to adjust the pace and complexity of effort. From the data currently in hand, it seems that CALI at all levels is seen as the right work to be doing for student success at this time.

As time has passed, we saw and heard fewer reports of feeling overwhelmed at the school visits. One superintendent described it last year as being more difficult for her principals to buy in than for the teachers – principals want to protect their teachers. We saw teachers generally rising to the occasion.

#### ***Union View***

Moving into the second stage of the evaluation – the school site visits, in order to explore more deeply the fidelity of CALI implementation, a key question was, “Where are the teachers with CALI?” There are at least three perspectives on this. First, administrators spoke about where they thought the teachers were, where there seemed to be “buy-in” or where there was “push-back,” and why they thought each was the case. RMC heard first from the district office leadership and various principal groups and next from individual building principals about their own particular faculties. Second, RMC listened to

leadership representatives of the two statewide professional teachers associations, the CEA (Connecticut Affiliate of the National Education Association) and the American Federation of Teachers Connecticut (AFT Affiliate) in order to explore the “union” voice. Finally, RMC explored what teachers themselves, as individuals and small groups, thought about the initiative as planned, the real work of CALI, and the effects they saw in their own students’ learning. Here, we present the professional teachers’ union view.

While some resistance or opposition from the union might have been anticipated, due to what we have already presented as a mammoth work scope and a truly ambitious amount of work, nothing could be farther from the truth. Both representatives wholeheartedly embraced CALI. After all, teachers want what is best for their students, and CALI promises to raise learning and achievement for even the toughest of the student populations. It was, in fact, a representative from these associations that initiated convening key players from the many walks of CALI to enhance the engagement of teachers in this work. Collaboration was the key ingredient to what they believed would make this work. *When you let us come to the table, we will bring the entrée! Things get accomplished and done!*

These association members worked initially to meet the issues teachers identified “head on” and to collaborate with the “powers that be” to make CALI work as well as it could. Issues identified early on were communication, including the framing or wording of certain concerns about achievement, “top down” decision making, including selection for participation in professional development modules and teacher leader teams or Data Teams, the PD itself, as well as the roll-out of the work, and finally, perhaps most importantly in the long run, capacity, including the seemingly omnipresent concerns about time and money.

Initially, teachers approached both organizations with concerns about communication. The Cambridge reports had hit the streets, and teachers were feeling everything from “out of the loop” about what was going on to concerns about the delivery of these reports. What was CALI? How were their districts identified? How did they get to be a priority district? What did it mean for them? Some felt that the reports were demoralizing and *teacher bashing*; in more than one district, teachers felt that they were being called *racist* - they felt that nothing could be farther from the truth. This initially prompted the associations to contact the state and figure out what was going on, as well as how teachers could be more included in the conversations and decision making.

Teachers had heard rumblings about Data Teams. There was a lot of *noise in the system*. Connecticut had been through legislative changes, and leadership changes, and there was a big push for accountability. But no one was talking to the teachers, according to these groups. They had the sense – and probably rightly so - that the CSDE was communicating with superintendents, who were communicating with assistant superintendents. They, in turn, were communicating with principals, who were communicating with teachers, and sometimes first with their inner circles. By the time the word got to teachers at large, it seemed watered down, less than clear, and according to some, the principals were already quite low on the totem pole, and barely understood

much of it themselves. *It was like the game of telephone that we used to play as kids!*

Thus began the series of meetings with representatives of key groups involved in CALI, some workshops, and overviews of the work, to attempt to move from *administrative filtration* to true *collaboration*. These meetings had their high points and their own sets of issues, but largely served to clear the air, and move forward in pursuit of including teachers as true partners. The association representatives felt that the state really listened, and much was clarified and improved. Some concern was voiced that these meetings would no longer continue after the fall of 2009.

There was concern about the uneven quality of the professional development modules and offerings (*some very good; some, deadly*) and what was intended for follow through. Were teachers to go back and use what they learned? Were they to lead and teach others in their school? Also, of concern was *Who got to participate?* It was generally perceived that principals hand picked teachers to go, so there seemed to be an inner circle of trained teachers, while the rest were expected to pick it up as best they could. So on the Theory of Action, “access” didn’t really happen for all. They recognized the limitations of numbers of teachers who could be out at one time, and the cost of substitutes, but would like to see teachers selecting teachers to participate, for example.

*We felt as if things were moving along rather nicely until last winter - and then the budget crashes! The DOE gets turned upside down!*

There was also the issue of time. On the collective bargaining slate is *looking at time for Data Teams. We’re looking at “zero’s” everywhere. At every bargaining table there are ZEROs! There is no more money. Data [meetings] take up time. Teachers are losing their prep time. The data time is what used to be their prep time.*

*This [CALI] could be great if you provided access and resources, but if you don’t have the resources? If you are going to do it right, fine, but if not, don’t do it at all. There is a lot of paper work. Some teachers have 37 kids in a class.*

Finally, these teachers’ representatives mentioned some concerns about the power and influence currently in educational decision making, in general – the dwindling and aging population of superintendents, the increasingly conservative nature of school boards, and in their view, there is less representation of parents on the boards. This affects some of the “top down” decision making and continues as communication flows through the channels. One respondent quoted one of the key External Consultants as saying that *making this kind of school change was like going to the moon in a 747, or rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic. This should go bottom up, not top down. We need to move the triangle upside down.* And in her own words she added, we need to move away from the kind of collaborative decision making where *we collaborate; they decide.*

All in all, albeit with concerns, representatives of both organizations felt positive about CALI, pleased that the State was listening and on their side, pleased that issues were being addressed, and that teachers would be partners in the Initiative.

Speaking with union representatives in three of the four schools, common themes emerged: themes of support for CALI, optimism for its power to affect student learning, and desire for increased collaboration with and communication from administrators. They were delighted to have the opportunity to speak with the evaluation team.

In response to these themes as represented above in the professional teacher union view, administrators agreed with one caveat. Given the enormous levels of accountability and urgency within the Partner Districts now, most principals and assistant superintendents feel that *the buck really stops here* with them, and that while they agree that increased collaboration and bottom up approaches to decision making would be great, they are feeling the pressures of time and the need to *get it right*, thus defending their hand picking of teacher leadership, and more autocratic decision making. A tough balance to strike, no doubt!

## Urgency

Ideally, awareness of CALI and buy-in are complemented with sense of urgency that motivates and produces action.

In the four districts receiving site visits, urgency was amplified. These districts conveyed a sense of no time to wait or waste here, and recognition that the full design need not be completed prior to piloting or moving with this Initiative. Nearly all Data Team members interviewed felt a sense of urgency. There is little patience for old adages, such as “change takes time” or “change takes five years.” Perhaps it will take time to see true impact, but the work begins in earnest now. *Make haste immediately and ramp up in order to see the results we need to see in three to five years* seemed to be the prevalent mood.

*I think that there is ... the recognition that the party's over. We're not going to be able to do whatever we want to do. We have to get this done. This is critical. Data is going to be part of what we do from now on. I mean I think that change in culture which you can see sort of identified in ... the long-term outcomes, I don't think that there's any question that there's some of that in all of the districts. I think two or three years ago: “Will this go away?” “Wait long enough, it will go away.” “We got our own way of doing it, leave us alone. It will get better.” I mean I don't think there's anyone left out there who really believes that we can do it on our own...*

The sense of urgency is definitely felt also at the school level. Clearly, the sense of urgency engendered by CALI that was expressed by district leaders has penetrated to the building and especially the classroom level. One district leader expressed that the mission is urgent: *I think that every educator should think of urgency when they are looking at a classroom and they only have one year with those students - that's pretty urgent to make sure you're getting them to the next level*, but questioned whether the CALI process has been effective in creating a sense of urgency. It was also noted that at the school level there is variation in urgency and level of buy-in from individuals: One principal put it this way: *CALI forced our hand – in a good way. We were looking at data only informally.* Another noted, *I do feel a sense of urgency at the elementary schools. I would say there's also individual push back from teachers that there are other more important things in life than CMT but I would say that's not everybody, that's not the*

*culture, it's just individuals.* One principal in describing her staff's reaction, however, said punishment is a more apt description of how they take it than urgency.

Summarizing findings on short-term outcomes, it seems that knowledge of CALI, buy-in to the model, and a sense of urgency are largely in place at the district level, and in many of the CALI district schools. Many of the CALI components have been well-received and a great deal of appreciation for the hard work that CSDE has done was expressed in both the survey findings and in the site visits. Urgency ripples out from the district to the schools, most certainly. As the work serves to make things better for children and young adults, teachers are highly likely to continue to sign on and commit for the long haul.

## **Theory of Action: Mid Term Outcomes**

### **Overview of Findings Related to the Theory of Action**

The Theory of Action section on Mid-term Outcomes includes the foundational elements upon which the CALI vision of data-driven improvement is enacted. A brief statement of status is made for each component based on survey and site visit data from districts and schools. This serves as an overview and sets up the primary finding regarding mid-term outcomes: districts and schools have begun implementation of the key structures for implementing CALI but need more support to make deep changes in practice.

- **District Data Teams:** All districts have established Data Teams, and are making use of CSDE supports to enact the Data Teams as envisioned.
- **School Data Teams:** Many schools seem to be familiar with School Data Teams and are in a variety of places in implementing them. Some schools may be working with “variations on the theme” of School Data Teams. More than half of the CALI district schools did not respond to the school level survey, tempering this statement.
- **Instructional Teams:** Same as above. Schools seem to be at various levels of sophistication (and therefore effectiveness) of use of Instructional Data Teams.
- **Teacher collaboration:** In schools that received site visits and that responded to the survey, teacher collaboration, with regard to teachers collaborating for student results in Data Team work, seems to be up. Representatives of two statewide professional teacher union organizations remain concerned about the level of collaboration with teachers by administrators in programmatic decision making and communication.
- **School culture:** Culture change is underway in schools that provided data. Some of the schools receiving site visits have made remarkable progress in changing culture; some with and some without commensurate increases in student achievement.
- **Effective teaching strategies:** This may be where the fulcrum sits for whether or not Data Teams are making the deeper changes in student achievement. Where as a result of

looking at student work, teachers are actually changing the way they teach and employing an array of appropriate and targeted - sometimes new - teaching strategies, student performance is improving. Where teachers and teams are moving through more mechanical use of the five steps of Data Team work, and not digging deeply into Step Four - selecting instructional strategies - schools are seeing little if any increase in the more summative student achievement results.

- **Student engagement and support:** School climate and non-academic needs of students continued to emerge as a concern for many respondents in schools in partner districts. Effective teaching strategies affect student engagement in academic areas.

Expanding on these points to summarize mid-term outcomes at the school and district levels, it seems that change is underway at both levels, but not complete. At the district level, there is evidence that initial changes have occurred. For example, one of the districts receiving a site visit reported on a staff survey that 80% or more of teachers know and agree with what is in the District Improvement Plan. *That's major. That's a big deal.* Survey data from all 15 partner districts corroborate that partner districts have taken steps to implement the CALI model. There is a high level of agreement that District Data Teams have been formed, that they drew on data and scientifically-based strategies in developing the Improvement Plans, they work with schools on their Improvement Plans, they use periodic benchmark assessments, they have provided professional development and used the Request for Service Process.

On the other hand, inconsistency is also perceived by RESC leaders who have supported districts on the move, but also have worked with others where progress is slow.

*So in other words, they invested a significant amount of time in Cambridge. They spent a significant amount of time working with [names of CSDE staff] to really understand specifically what their District Improvement Plan needed to look like and then understood clearly and have made the shift to understand clearly that that PD plan that includes all of these CALI services is the subcomponent of that District Improvement Plan. They made that shift and that's a huge paradigm shift, I think, for districts. When they make it, they then are able to target their PD services that are coming and technical assistance services that are coming through CALI in a little bit more impactful way. (RESC Leader)*

*We have some others who haven't quite taken this seriously. They've written the plans. They've done the compliance pieces but they really haven't drilled it down to the point where it's really changing the culture, or even beginning to change the Central Office culture, which sure needs a start. And so the changes there aren't as prominent. You almost kind of wonder, have we been there at all at some of them? (RESC Leader)*

At the school level, many principals are aware of what it takes to implement data driven school improvement with fidelity, and they are striving to make the changes that have been envisioned. We saw four schools at quite different phases of implementation, employing multiple “variations on the theme” of the CALI model.

*I think the intentions are great. Principals are supportive. It's overwhelming-feeling at times for a lot of people. So I suppose my overview ... would be that it takes a long time to get it down to the teacher level and then to implement it with fidelity. It's time consuming. Don't know what the easy answer is there. (Principal)*

*I wish I had more ... time with teachers to just tear it apart even deeper and so training them and hoping they do this kind of discussion in [their] grade levels when they meet together at a common time .... I don't want to just know strengths, weaknesses or totals. The total means nothing if you don't [know]... who these children are [and specifically what each child knows or doesn't know...] (Principal)*

Evaluation field work indicates that deepening and broadening implementation, so that fidelity is reached in all schools that undertake CALI, and then sustained over time, is the current challenge that faces CSDE. Their on-going work may be facilitated by a more explicit definition of implementation and more systematic efforts to support it through a range of stages.

### **Toward a Definition of Implementation**

The point the principals quoted above make is well taken: the endeavor is deep, complex, and there is not an easy answer. A major mid-term finding is that schools, where the rubber meets the road in changing practice, need more or perhaps a different kind of support to ensure that they can implement CALI fully and well and therefore reap its benefits. In particular, two issues of interest emerged during the school site visits that affect the discussion of findings in this section:

(1) There is a difference between CALI as a “name brand set of activities” and the actual data driven practices that underlie it. Two of the schools visited have bought into and are implementing CALI as a brand (high level of awareness and broad staff participation in modules and other CALI services) AND are still working on reaching a high level of implementation of the envisioned data driven practices AND as yet show little improvement in student achievement. Another school has made CALI work for them and made good choices in which CALI services support they incorporate into their already strong approach to data driven improvement, AND which in combination with advantages of other initiatives and strong efforts, have made impressive gains in student achievement (exiting Identified for Improvement status). Yet another of the schools receiving a site visit had little awareness of CALI as a brand. They were implementing another approach to collaborative decision making begun by their large urban district prior to joining CALI. While they are seeing some trends gains in student achievement, these are not enough to make AYP. In this section of the report, we will posit that the vision as stated in the Theory of Action and its enactment at a high level is what implementation should be measured against. In other words, it is the practice, not the name of the practice that is important.

(2) The actual data driven improvement practices that underlie the CALI brand – whether called CALI or something else--are sometimes in shadow for educators. The RESC leader quoted below illustrates the difference between having awareness of Data Teams (or other components of the data driven improvement system) and practices that are

enacted at a level of sophistication that is deep enough to change student achievement. The theme of getting beyond the superficial to the deep is one that surfaced frequently in the data.

*Some of those things are in place but at the Central Office level, there's no monitoring for quality. They're just saying, "Do you have a Data Team?" The principal says, "Yeah, I have a Data Team." "Okay, good." There's no visitation of it. Unlike in [district name], what we did was we have a leadership team at the Central Office level. They've been out to every school to meet with every principal to say, 'show us evidence that you are working proficiently as a Data Team.' You know and they gave them the rubric. I've tried to be very explicit about the expectations for what these Data Teams should be doing, what they should look like. But that's not happening most other places in my region. In my region, it's more a checklist of did you go through that module, do you have a Data Team? (RESC Leader)*

At school visits a year after the RESC and district conversations, we heard quite a bit more about district wide practices of walk-through's, setting common expectations, checklists and rubrics for Data Team work, and district Data Team discussions about quality of implementation, so there is evidence that "many hands are on deck" with increasing fidelity of implementation, even though most everyone would agree that it is complex, time consuming, and challenging still, at best.

CSDE is confronted by the challenge of supporting districts and schools in gaining a clearer understanding of the actual mechanism of change in teaching and learning that is at the heart of CALI. Several participants in data collection articulated a personal theory of action that is based on belief that participation in CALI activities, hope, and time will lead to improved student outcomes, such as this district leader who compared CALI to building an airplane while flying it.

*And then when we're ready, we've gotten on the airplane and... Why did we build it? While we're flying it, but that we keep trying and using different strategies and anticipating that the scores are going to be up, of course we do, hoping but it may be one of those kinds of projects that all of a sudden you see the spike. (District Leader)*

*I'm disappointed as a district we haven't seen the results, because we've been working hard as a district, don't you think? I mean we've embraced the CALI or we've been in the forefront of it.... We had hoped to see more gains. We've been in it how many years now? Five. And it's slow. (District Leader)*

Success with CALI practices is not a matter of belief, hope, and time. It is a matter of learning, practicing, and mastering a set of complex skills that make up data driven improvement and that are facilitated with supportive policies, practices and procedures both at the school and district levels. A more refined approach to discussing implementation is needed to move beyond achievement of short terms outcomes into support for changed practice. First, what is

implementation? Fortunately, the literature on Implementation Science<sup>4</sup> provides some key concepts that will help guide discussion of mid-term outcomes.

- **Related to implementation:** Implementation is supported when: (1) the improvement initiative is defined in a description of **key elements** which describe the standards of practice of interest (for CALI, this is not the big picture in the Theory of Action, but more similar to the rubrics for Instructional Teams that are under development); (2) **teachers concerns** about the innovation as a change process that effects them are taken into account; and (3) the innovation is described in terms of **levels of use—from non-use, orientation and preparation, to mechanical use, to routine use, and beyond to refinement, integration and renewal**. CALI is enmeshed in the mid-term outcomes related to implementation at present. Systematic and explicit support for implementation is needed at this time in order to move the state from the impressive foundation that has been built and the tremendous amount of support that has come through the process of Cambridge reviews and plan development, the module training, and, in schools where the resource is available, the support of Data Facilitators or Coaches, or both.
- **Related to sustainability:** Sustainability is actually the last stage of the implementation cycle, representing a time when educators have a level of mastery that permits **refining** the innovation, **integrating and institutionalizing** it by building policy and system support, and renewing energy and enthusiasm as the power of the practice bears fruit for students and teachers alike. Most leaders of schools and districts visited for this evaluation recognized that **funding, leadership, culture, and sufficient supports** have a lot to do with building sustainability, and they are concerned about it. Thought is underway and actions are informal. In the data collected, most leaders have yet to take the step of explicitly planning for sustaining data driven improvement, or scaling it up for use in schools that are not in Identified for Improvement status.
- **Related to scaling up:** Each new site implementing the innovation will require support to work through all the levels of implementation, though any systemic changes that support one school in a district to sustain the work will also benefit others.

Support for the finding that full and sophisticated implementation of CALI's data driven improvement practices is not yet in place comes from the school survey findings on CALI modules. The modules certainly address the key components of the vision and there is ample evidence that the modules are appreciated and have been utilized to the level intended. The survey queried respondents on four items for each module: one about awareness of the module; one on participation in the training; one on belief in value in improving student achievement and one on implementation. Grand means for each type of item across the modules was calculated (a four-point Likert scale, with 4 representing strong agreement.) These are arranged in order from highest level of agreement to lowest.

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<sup>4</sup> Two major camps of the study of implementation are the Concerns-based Adoption Model (CBAM) created by Gene Hall and Shirley Hord, working in education, and the National Implementation Research Network, located at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, with roots in health and human services and some recent work in education. The two approached identified remarkably similar concepts with different language. In this report, we will use CBAM language as it is likely to be more familiar to educators.

- Believe what I learned will help improve achievement: 3.18
- Have participated in training: 3.03
- Am aware of the module: 2.99
- Am implementing practices: 2.91

Particularly notable is the gap between believing that the modules will improve student achievement and the degree of agreement that practices promoted in the modules are being implemented. The difference ( $d = 0.27$ ) between the average belief in improving achievement and average implementing practices pieces is statistically significant at  $\alpha = 0.05$ . The break down by module is shown below:

<b>Summary of Responses to CALI Modules</b>				
<b>Module</b>	<b>Believe</b>	<b>Participated</b>	<b>Awareness</b>	<b>Implementing</b>
<b>CFA</b>	3.18	3.15	3.15	3.01
<b>DDDM/DT</b>	3.31	3.48	3.38	3.28
<b>ELL</b>	3.1	2.69	2.73	2.62
<b>ETS</b>	3.29	3.21	3.07	3.04
<b>MSW</b>	3.12	2.95	2.84	2.78
<b>School Climate</b>	3.14	2.96	3.01	2.92
<b>SRBI</b>	3.1	2.77	2.72	2.74
<b>Grand mean</b>	3.18	3.03	2.99	2.91

The concepts described above relating to implementing, sustaining and scaling up will be used in discussion below to frame analysis that is based on school and district level data. First, an analysis of current practice will provide a window into what implementation looks like at the school level. Then several key sustainability issues will be explored.

### **Analysis of Current Practice: Level of Implementation**

Here is what data-driven improvement looks like in the four schools visited, with a variety of vignettes representing different levels of use at different schools and grade levels. These are presented as examples to illustrate the CALI vision enacted and to enable discussion of the current level of implementation of data-driven decision-making.

#### **Kindergarten**

The Kindergarten Data Team is getting ready to meet, and – as one might expect – each member is exuberant, thrilled to have visitors, excited about their young children, proud of their collaborative work, and appreciative of their Data Team time together. They all bubble over with what they are doing, looking at, trying to accomplish, and actually succeeding. Kindergarten teachers always have stories, specific examples, and samples of student work, and this team was no exception to that prideful display of what they were up

to these days as a team. “Morgan” (fictional name) is the Data Team Leader. All of the team leaders sit on the school Data Team, and we meet Morgan again at the end of the day with the School Team. *We are working on beginning common sounds, and today we are looking at the post test we will give at the end of this month.* They are using “dipsticks” to plan their lessons. *We use our data to place students in flexible groups. We move them around among three or four levels.* They explained how they decide to move students up or down, based on their formative data. They differentiate instruction, and they use flexible grouping. They have been working on five skills, and with the dipstick they will note whether kids get it or not, with a check, a check minus, or a check plus. Their example was “George” – *How could we get George the extra supports he needs to succeed?* Two or three children from K take advantage of supplemental services allowed them via NCLBA outside of school, but not George.

The first month or two in school, they do little more than review and plan. *Then we are able to delve into our data driven instruction and decision making. We work with parents. Some are receptive; others are harder to reach. We have four kindergarten classes, 15% ESL. The ESL teacher comes to many of our Data Team meetings. We also consult with our special education teacher to learn effective strategies. Most of our kids come in with a blank slate. They are students at risk.*

*We meet twice a week, on Tuesdays and Thursdays. We look at student work.*

Each team member shared their module training experience; CFA, DDDM, CFA, MSW. Morgan used to be on the second grade team, so has a good handle on what is expected of these students in the years to come, and enjoys working now on the ground floor. *I’m the “dipstick lady!”* They do benchmark assessments three times a year. CMP begins in third grade. There has been a “mirror test” for 2<sup>nd</sup> graders, and now they are developing these – bringing it down to K and 1<sup>st</sup> grade. They have always done guided reading and connecting to text; now they are getting ready to tackle comprehension in a very big way, although the student work they were examining this morning was beginning sound recognition, their current unit. They drove easily through what was administered recently, one by one with beginning sound recognition, placing the students in the got it, got it with ease, or didn’t get it groups for next steps. That produced a new grouping for more work or deeper work in this particular area of phonics, along with a dialog about what strategies might work next with each group or individual.

## **Grade 1**

*Today’s agenda is fluency – to look at our dipstick scores and then to set a SMART goal.* They were gearing up to increase their first graders’ sight words per minute by 50% by late spring. 70% of the first graders would read 53 words per minute – up from the 46% earlier in the year. This team was focused and ambitious, lively. Their sense of urgency was apparent. They also appeared to be rather new at this work, and tied to their protocols.

The school literacy coach used her few minutes on the agenda to review the district writing prompts calendar with the team – as she was doing with each instructional team throughout

the day. They were both receptive and eager to move on to their own data work at hand. They were using the *[Their School] Data Team Forms* which they maintain at each grade level, and which the Principal keeps in her big school data binder, to drive the process, analyzing why the students did well – and did not – with the dipsticks, as well as what all the Instructional Teams are accomplishing.

“Gloria”, (fictional name) the Principal prompts the team members to really look at the student work and particular items on the assessments, not to just rely on their memory or to make snap judgments based upon existing notions. She’s really quite good at facilitating their deeper level thinking and reasoning about staying focused with and using the data. *You have to look at what the students actually said! Then, what are some strategies we can teach them?* There is a list of district sight words.

The teachers brainstormed three reasons the students might have done well, and three for why they might not have performed. They brainstormed and discussed teaching strategies, set some new expectations, scheduled a new “dipstick date” and completed their forms and minutes for their meeting.

[Additional note that Gloria is once again anxious to get to comprehension. *Literacy IS comprehension for first graders!* She feels it is challenging. *They mostly used to start at grade three.* She is interested in accessing some of the *excellent staff development out there for comprehension in the primary grades.*]

## **Grade 5**

The fifth grade Instructional Data Team meets to conduct an item analysis of a recent benchmark assessment in math. In the absence of local district common assessments, this school adopted the Meriden Benchmark Assessments (developed by a nearby district.) Recently, however, the district is interested in adopting a different set of assessments developed by one of the state’s RESCs. For the time being, the principal and many in the school find these assessments invaluable, and are continuing to use them until procedures change. They are designed to be used as both pre- and post-tests and to simulate the state assessments. They are accompanied by useful data printouts, disaggregated by student, classroom teacher, and by test item.

The principal sees this team struggling with the notion of Data Teams – by the idea of looking at student work to inform and shape their instructional practices. They were comfortable with their pacing guides and lesson plans that had always worked for them. *The district pacing guides do not align with what kids need to know when, and this is a problem,* the principal said. This meeting was a window into what teachers need for supports as they begin to work this way – to engage in data driven decision making. Two of the four members had been trained in DDDM, so the knowledge base was in the room.

The content at hand was “estimation” and they had before them the test booklets, scoring sheets, and analyses, from which they could tell how individuals and clusters of students did on any particular test item, or concept. Instead of really digging in and seeing what they

could see, how and why students might have responded with distracters or misconceptions, or what the data told them about their teaching, they were bogged down with issues about the test, the analysis, or the wording of a particular item, and they struggled with how the next SMART goal might be written. This team could definitely have benefitted from a Data Facilitator, not only to keep them on task and moving forward, but also with some strategies for analyzing and using data.

### **High School English Instructional Team**

The flavor of this triad of 9<sup>th</sup> grade English teachers was one of true camaraderie, *three likeminded people on a team*, a keen eye on tracking the common curriculum, and a commitment to doing what is right for students. Their new “9<sup>th</sup> grade program” was evolving a few years back at about the same time as CALI evolved, and that was a nice match. One teacher remembers feeling *very isolated* prior to this Data Team work, and things are quite different now. There’s far more continuity for both teachers and students. They’ve been working on their CFA’s and a *Universal Theme List*, a toolbox of themes that can actually be used not only for English literature, but across the content areas. This way, students reach 10<sup>th</sup> grade having had the same curriculum offerings, regardless of which teacher they had in 9<sup>th</sup> grade. This is a direct result of the Data Team process at this High School. All their CFA’s are based on data, and are very skill based. Previously, there was a lack of both horizontal and vertical alignment, and they are tweaking that now.

*We use a backward design, UbD approach; we know what is expected in 10<sup>th</sup> grade testing. What are they seeing for results for students? Is the 9<sup>th</sup> grade successful? Are we successful? Ask the 10<sup>th</sup> grade teachers! Within the time frame for our CFA’s we are seeing improvements. Are they retaining it? We don’t know yet.* The teachers provided some detail about their skill work with themes, examples of student work, how students responded to the prompts, and how that changed their teaching strategies for continuing on with that particular skill and understanding.

*We’re struggling with differentiation now. ETS really helps us in differentiation. We’re really working on the strategies now. When asked if all teams were experiencing such a love fest, the response was a little less bubbly. Well, some teachers - old school - want to do what they love; they want to follow their passion. Now, it’s not that we can’t do what we love, but we are more planned and thoughtful about this. Following the grade level expectations, and mapping this all out. It’s been OK for the three of us. We still do what we love – we love the kids and we want them to succeed! ...but it’s been a struggle for some of the teachers, it’s been hard for them to give up certain units and content, the school has changed dramatically from how it was. And kids...kids access knowledge in very different ways now. When I went to school it was – I needed to know X; now it’s – I need to look on the Internet for X.*

A common theme across schools visited is that the district level assessments can be daunting for students, making the CFA’s even more necessary for meaningful data work. That is true for this team and school.

What's next? *We need better baseline data. There's some philosophical disagreement about whether or not to hit kids with assessments first thing in 9<sup>th</sup> grade. So, we're in the middle of this work to identify theme and summarization, and we don't really have baseline.* There are also methodological issues about using the same test for pre- and post-testing. This Data Team is quite open about what they've learned and where they need to go next – more work on strategies, and assessment methodology, but they have a lot going for them in spirit, intention, and professional learning from data driven work.

These grade-level team vignettes illustrate how data are being used for decision-making across the grade levels and essentially show partial implementation, with variation in the level of implementation by team. This finding is representative of findings from the school level data in general. Of the four schools visited, the following **comments about implementation level** of use may be made: One school did not yet have a fully functioning Data Team, so they were moving from non-use to orientation. For one team, on the day of the site visit, the meeting was essentially cancelled, other than a brief update, due to some professional development scheduling conflicts for the leadership. Good reason, but an entire month of data work was lost for that team. This team was in mechanical use, in that they had the right membership and procedures in place, but they did not seem concerned that their work session was lost. Yet another had some characteristics of a team in refinement, or even integration, in that they seemed to have stabilized their routine, aligned CALI with other initiatives, and analyzed the collective data to make their best decisions for students. It almost seemed as if – had any one of the team members been interviewed - the same story would have emerged. They had it down. The fourth Team was interesting in yet another way, in that they were approaching renewal, having made AYP, so obviously having had the opportunities over time to really hone in on student data. They were revisiting some of the more mundane or mechanical processes, such as agendas, minutes, data walls, with the intention of building in sustainability for the inevitable staff turnover. So, one big issue is that unyielding and laser focus on thinking about Data Team implementation. If the attention strays, fidelity is at risk.

### **Challenges in Reaching Full Implementation**

It is not surprising that evaluation data show partial implementation with variation in level according to the particular Team being looked at. Some of the general challenges to reaching a high level (fidelity) of implementation are discussed below.

- **Getting beyond buy-in.** Teacher buy-in was discussed earlier in the report, but after the buy-in phase, there seems to be a little Data Team behavior of *when the cat's away...* Both district administrators and Data Facilitators – not principals – expressed that if someone is not right there to make sure teams are on task and staying the course of the process, at all times, some teams will slip. At first, both school based literacy and mathematics coaches and Data Facilitators assist Instructional Data Team leaders through the DDDM multi-step process; but both groups believe that in order to sustain the work, they need to be weaned from that role, and that teachers need to take over and be able to lead the process to make it a part of ongoing culture. Certainly some groups do this. Many of the groups interviewed do; however, when asked if all teams are that faithful,

those high performing teams' response was usually less glowing. The same might be said for School Data Teams.

- **Teacher turnover.** Staff turnover – again – is an issue in reaching full implementation with Data Team work. From the discussion above, it is hard enough to do this work with consistent staffing, and extremely challenging with the rate of turnover schools have experienced. The same is true for Data Teams. It is not unusual for an entire grade level team to change membership in a single year, according to one Data Facilitator. This is an extension of the phenomenon described for an entire school with module training, but it is exacerbated at the Data Team level, particularly as the leadership and training of staff are diluted.
- **Changing instructional practices.** Finally and where the real sweet spot lies for this data work is in “Step Four” of the Reeves DDDM Model – “Select Instructional Practices.” The sophisticated Data Facilitators and Team leaders know that this is where the change really begins to take place for students, but this step that is often skipped, due to time or avoidance, or both. When teachers work collaboratively and really come to understand that they need to change their practice to get different results – that is the turning point. *And not just find a different strategy off the top of their head! I tell them they need to do some research, they need to find out what has worked for other teachers, they need to learn new strategies! So the strategies – that is the biggest challenge that I see.* This facilitator recalled working with a group ready to move on from the unit, with less than stellar success in student achievement. She asked them to walk through the steps of their process, and they apparently glazed over Step Four. *What about selecting instructional strategies? Oh, we didn't have time for that step, so we skipped it.* Teachers at the earlier grades seem to have an easier time with this and progress monitoring than do those at the upper grades, because formative assessments have been more routinely incorporated into their repertoire.
- **Supports and infrastructures that underlie the CALI Model.** Implementation at the school level is facilitated or hindered depending on the strength and effectiveness of the systems that form the foundation to data-driven improvement. These are discussed in detail in the next section.

### **Support for Reaching Full Implementation and Sustaining**

What would support for implementation consist of? This can be thought of in two ways. First, the fine-grained support that Data Facilitators and locally supported coaches typically provide to Instructional Teams and School Data Teams is critical. An on-going opportunity to practice and receive feedback on skills related to data-driven instruction is possibly the only way to achieve the sophisticated data driven decision-making practices that underlie CALI. Second, at a broader level, implementation can be facilitated and supports, which often take the form of infrastructures, policies, and procedures at the district level that are aligned with the instructional level practice, are also critical to sustaining the practice. It may be most productive for CSDE and partner districts to work on the fine-grained support of Instructional Teams and the systemic supports described below at the same time.

- Curriculum-instruction-assessment foundations.** CALI was established from the beginning to represent collaboration among the CSDE Bureaus. Wisely, this included the Curriculum Bureau in recognition of the fact that the aligned, standards-based system is the context in which envisioned CALI practice functions. Data indicated that curriculum was not a strong leg of the three-legged stool initially (school improvement, curriculum, and monitoring); however more recent reorganizations and staff changes have resulted in a more prominent and promising role for curriculum, instruction, standards, grade expectations, and such to shore up the content of the hard work of changing and deepening instructional practices. The stronger the foundations of the standards-based educational system are, the more supported and functional the data-driven practice under CALI will be. Data are not deep enough to permit detailed analysis of the adequacy of standards-based infrastructures and it would be beyond the scope of this evaluation to truly undertake that. However, data raised two issues that CSDE may want to investigate further and factor into its thinking in improving CALI: (1) the extent to which development and implementation of curriculum has received adequate attention; and (2) whether there are data tools that are readily available to districts.

With regard to curriculum: *If there were a state suggested curriculum in all areas and benchmarks that the state has created tied to those...tied to that curriculum and expected performances at specific times it makes it easier for us to hold ourselves accountable and for high mobility kids, which all of the districts that are in need of improvement have high mobility... it's the internal consistency of our system that would be a great way of moving us forward.*

One principal talked about the need for professional development, which goes beyond CALI and delves deeper into these areas of content, pedagogy, and content pedagogy. Once Data Teams are established and people understand the basics of how to make standards work, what effective teaching strategies are, and know the need for common formative assessments – the real work just begins! Then, they know more about what they don't know, or need to know about.

*The CALI initiatives are all good, but all the PD I need for my staff is not delivered by CALI. CALI initiatives are good, but it's like putting all our eggs in one basket. The CALI work is terrific, and there is a larger need for curricular support and content specific work. Comprehension right now is a big problem we have. All that we have do in Kindergarten, first grade and second grade to get ready for third grade, when the testing begins is enormous! Right now K is spending a lot of time in fluency, letter recognition, beginning sounds – they need to be tackling comprehension! (School Principal)*

*I'm getting a lot of requests now for more content specific people. Like, we're having trouble in math, so I usually send my math person in. Like, what are some strategies we could put in for math? Or if it's more of a reading [issue], what are some strategies we could put in for reading? I think they just need more support with it because a lot of times they don't know what to do differently. (RESC/SERC Leader)*

- **Rigor and relevance of data.** Having the right data at the right time is critical to the CALI model. Three of the districts visited suggested that further developing data systems and tools that combine data from different sources would be helpful. One district is developing its own data system, and the others are making inroads in that direction simply because Data Teams need to be able to easily manipulate a variety of types of data. In the opinion of these district leaders, the alignment of local student information systems and a database with the capacity to store and analyze student learning data is critical to CALI work.

*One thing we talked about earlier is we don't even have data systems to collect the data and it's pretty pathetic. We have all the data that's coming out at us and like I'm trying to catch this data with a butterfly net. You know? It's flying... All the butterflies are flying all over the place. It's coming at us and I'm like trying to catch it with a butterfly net, you know? And I can't catch it all. Not to mention create information out of it.*

This high need was also echoed at the school level. How can Data Teams work without good data? Learning all of the steps, processes and tools for Data Teams is foundational; however, once at work, team members need to have data that are in useful and accessible formats to respond to their needs for use and decision making. Instructional Data Teams may be looking more at individual and small group data; however School Data Teams need sound, aggregate and disaggregated data to make good decisions, using the more summative assessment data. Also, one of the greatest challenges now appears to lie within the work where the District and School Data Teams and the Instructional Data Teams meet.

*One big way that the state could help us is to create the data collection warehouse and management systems. All districts, not just ours, are wrestling and some that are bigger maybe have an easier way of doing this... You know there's the one aspect of analyzing the data but just getting it to the point where you can analyze it... an easy-to-use, functional data warehouse ...and if the state could preload all that for us, boy, that would be a...that would be a big help.*

The importance of the infrastructures of the standards-based system is reinforced by a RESC leader: *How do we do anything to support or encourage [CALI work] systemically other than just talk about it? I think long-term clearly the trainings are important, the frameworks are important, the modules are important - but if you don't take care of the foundational business first, the rest of it is sand.*

*I think they all have the structure now and they're all collecting a lot of data. Where we get stuck is when we get to the part of what are we going to do with the data, so the instructional piece and that's what we're working with most of the schools on. They've done a great job with their scheduling now. They meet on a regular basis. But how do we move to what are we going to do differently in our classrooms.... (District Leader)*

School site visits reinforced that technical aspects of the Data Team work present challenges to success. First, there is the issue of *what data? Are they looking at the right data?* Most Teams are juggling the state summative test scores used for AYP accountability, with district assessments based on grade level expectations and curriculum pacing guides, and their own common formative assessments that are more grounded in their unit development and where the students actually are. Particularly for these partner district schools, there are wide gaps between each of those levels, and this work merely illuminates what they already know – that their students have a long way to go to be on grade level and successful! One Executive Coach was concerned that the teams were getting stuck on some of the CFAs, and would never move off the mark at the rate they were going. Then, are they using the right data processes to analyze data? For example, one Data Facilitator and module trainer was deeply concerned that Teams are using the same assessment for both pre- and post- testing, and that that was a statistical “no-no.” We observed that very practice fairly widely, and this is only one of several examples of the need for increasing professional learning about how to develop, analyze, and use good data. Most teachers are not well trained in statistical analysis or the real innards of good data work. Data Facilitators are, by and large; however there is minimal time in which to impart such a knowledge base.

- **Professional development delivery system.** The Module Training is the professional development system that is meant to support data-driven instruction in an integrated system of plans from the district to school to instructional team levels. The CALI Interim Evaluation Report documented that the state is moving in the right direction, according to most, to build internal capacity, so as not to depend on out-of-state, high priced consultants. The RESC/SERC respondents hailed this notion, as well, and saw it clearly as a good step.

The RESC Alliance and SERC is a tremendous asset for its potential as a delivery system. Leaders of these organizations are supportive of CALI and have ideas about how they can improve their role in the CALI system. A Quality Assurance Workgroup has been meeting all year to address issues of quality and consistency of the module training, expectations for the training and certification, management and accountability for the participation and outcomes, and more. As educators highly experienced in working with systems and working with teachers to improve instructional practice, Alliance leaders are very aware of the need to work with the CSDE to plan for taking a systemic approach to improvement and tracking progress toward implementation and outcome goals.

*I don't think that from the translation from a District Improvement Plan to the CALI services, that there's a very clear line of connection between the results, the indicators of success that we need to define, and the actual strategies... So for example, in [district name], where we're beginning the process of writing our RFS and I'm going to be walking them through making those links. And it's not only for their benefit, it's for the service provider's benefit as well as the state's benefit because then I can track performance...An analysis of qualitative and quantitative data that says, based on what you want to do, here's your level of readiness for that and therefore how we intentionally plan for the results you really want to get to because we know where we are. That's a missing piece*

*here that we need to figure out how to do that within the overall design. (RESC/SERC Leader)*

The Interim Evaluation Report described disappointment on the part of district leaders, regarding the quality of some local trainers (as opposed to the national trainers the first 12 districts initially worked with) and ability to enroll in module training in the timeframe desired. CSDE was aware of the need to address quality issues between the state, the RESCs, and the districts and formed a committee for that purpose. CSDE staff reported that the Quality Assurance Workgroup has focused particularly on Data Teams and SRBI. They have worked to develop a rubric for each of the three levels of Data Teams: district, school, and instructional. These rubrics were distributed to all partner districts and schools, and are on the CALI website. CSDE has contracted again with the Leadership and Learning Center to provide additional professional development and consultation to the module trainers in order to promote higher levels of quality and consistency. The CSDE coordinators have developed quarterly newsletters for trainers, and have posted them on the website, as well. Webinars have been conducted. The glossary and some additional tools and resources have been updated and refined. Also, the TAST database is being revisited, revised, and staffed differently in order to be able to provide useful management and accountability data on the participation and results of module training sessions. Evaluation of the trainings and feedback forms are also in revision for enhanced implementation and use.

CSDE shared the following data on LEA participation in module training which demonstrates that the training sessions are still going strong and continuing with special priority for partner district school personnel to participate. Participation peaked during the second year of offering, while certification, creating local capacity for training, continues to increase.

<b>CALI Completions by December 2009</b>			
<b>Title</b>	<b>07</b>	<b>08</b>	<b>09</b>
Best Practices in Educating Our English Language Learners		55	76
Classroom Data: Feedback, Follow up, and Follow Through		21	10
Coaching Data Teams			17
Coaching Data Teams: Train the Trainer			9
Coaching Effective Teaching Strategies		31	
Coaching Instructional Data		44	
Common Formative Assessment Basic	245	222	78
Common Formative Assessment Certification	67	41	27
Data-Driven Decision Making / Data Team Basic	117	215	49
Data-Driven Decision Making / Data Team Certification	39	49	29
Effective Teaching Strategies	104	242	91
Effective Teaching Strategies Certification	41	61	

CALI Completions by December 2009			
Title	07	08	09
Improving School Climate Basic			42
Improving School Climate to Support Student Achievement	82	131	
Improving School Climate to Support Student Achievement: Creating Climates of Respect: Certification Training		37	
Leading Change and Getting Everyone on Board		55	
Making Standards Work	59	131	
Making Standards Work Certification		17	
Paraprofessional Module: Understanding CALI		50	
RESCHEDULED: Leading Change and Getting Everyone on Board			9
School Climate for Leaders		27	
School Improvement Planning		81	25
Scientific Research-Based Interventions Basic		205	54
Scientific Research-Based Interventions Certification		54	

- Models.** One way of accelerating implementation is providing models of what the envisioned practices look like in action. At the beginning of SY09-10, there were more than 30 Demonstration Schools in 15 partner districts and additional “Coach Only” Schools. (Also, some partner districts used their own funding to provide some of these Demonstration School resources to additional schools within their districts.) These Demonstration Schools have received more intensive support for their work with data driven improvement. Information gathered in school site visits (which included two Demonstration Schools) indicated that the additional resources are appreciated and have been used well, internally to the school. It is less clear what the responsibilities of Demonstration Schools are for actually modeling practices, “demonstrating” their successes and challenges statewide, or even being a way of helping other schools within district.

### Demonstration Schools

Demonstration Schools were the result of a brainstorm at the CSDE when a new federal grant was awarded to shore up the support of Title I and identified schools. The CSDE staff wanted to assist districts to build capacity and develop models within for new schools to look to for “CALI demonstration” as it were. *We understand the process of Data Teams, but knowing something conceptually and actually putting it into application are two very, very different things.* There were a lot of requests from the field of the state department, for more on site, embedded, continuous implementation support. And so the Demonstration School concept was developed collaboratively among CSDE, RESCs, and CAS. Formal goals for the Demonstration Schools were to:

- *Demonstrate to policy makers and those who allocate resources that schools can be successful when provided with the necessary support.*
- *Build district capacity by supporting research-based practices that have been proven to yield improved student outcomes.*

Good candidates were schools poised for success, with specific criteria. More a district choice, but the state did provide some guiding criteria, e.g. Title 1 school, strong leadership in place, some evidence of capacity to make use of additional resources for success, collaborative processes with faculty, willingness to implement CALI as designed, and poised to experience success in the short two year period of time. Both an Executive Coach, provided for the principal, and a Data Facilitator provided for the Data Teams were resources provided to Demonstration Schools. Foundational training in at least some of the CALI modules was required, and collaboration with faculty was a must.

The Executive Coach, usually a retired school leader, hired by the Connecticut Association of Schools - CAS - not the CSDE, works two, three, or four days a month providing technical assistance and coaching for the principal, to assist the school leader in maximizing the resources of CALI, in order to achieve the results laid out in the school improvement plan. Also, the coach and the principal develop an action plan to help guide that process and implementation of the improvement plan. This is a collegial – not a *big brother* type of relationship. Each coach-principal relationship is different. It is highly contextual. *It's about that school, that leader, that faculty, that challenge, so the fifty-five odd [Demonstration school] stories are all very different*, described one state leader.

The state and CAS knew that all great [retired] school administrators do not make great coaches, necessarily, so preparation and development for the coaches was provided. *So, there is a heavy emphasis placed on ...this whole type of coaching, instructional coaching. You're the guide on the side. It's not about you any more. It's about his or her school and their work and how we can help them achieve their goals, holding the mirror up, asking the provocative questions. That requires training and ongoing conversations; and I think we really have a good bunch of people who have been able to do that, and then share their experiences with the new crowd.*

Demonstration Schools also have a Data Team Facilitator who is a RESC Alliance and SERC staff member who is a certified trainer in DDDM, ETS, and CFA, at a minimum. These facilitators are on site twice a month, and work with the school Data Team and the instructional Data Teams, as well. They may facilitate, provide technical assistance, and work in a differentiated instruction approach with the adults.

Finally, Demonstration Schools receive additional funding to support substitutes, or released time for teachers, or professional development materials to guide their collaborative work and common data and planning time.

At the writing of this report, the 09-10 assessment data were not yet available. The following was reported at the 2010 Fifth Annual Data Showcase, based on spring 09 data distributed in summer 09:

- *Three of the first 12 Demonstration Schools, 07-10, and one of the second 10 Demonstration Schools 08-10, were removed from the “In Need of Improvement List;”*
- *Two of the 07-10 and three of the 08-10 Demonstration Schools made “Safe Harbor;”*
- *All of those schools showed double digit gains in at least one grade;*
- *Six schools showed double digit gains in grades 3 and 4;*
- *There were flat areas in at least three schools;*
- *There was slippage in five schools in grades 3 to 5.*

Wisely, the CSDE has decided to continue at least some of these schools in Demonstration school status for another year, and are not adding any new schools. The data above suggest that Demonstration Schools are beginning to see substantial results, but are not all there yet after two or even three years of these intensive services and activities. A separate evaluation is in progress to look at Demonstration Schools and their progress and results.

The CSDE is in the process of having one District Data Team, a School Data Team, and an Instructional Data Team videotaped for use by teams statewide who want to see good practices modeled for them. This is a strong beginning to “demonstrating” the Demonstration Schools (although only one of the three teams to be video taped is from a partner district.). Creating multiple means of networking and showcasing – like more of the data showcase opportunities – is desired by school participants who often reported feeling isolated, or unaware of what others were doing to address very similar challenges.

The two Demonstration Schools visited were truly appreciative of their status as a Demonstration School, were implementing the Demonstration School activities with good intention and progress. One was removed from the “In Need of Improvement List” and one had experienced slippage. They were both concerned about sustainability of their progress without continuation of Demonstration School status beyond this year. Beyond the Demonstration Schools (and somewhat within) we found that there is not a thorough or deep understanding on the part of some teams as to what all this data driven work should really look like. Increasing clarity of expectations and standards, videotapes and professional learning opportunities to accompany the tapes, and additional opportunities for networking will extend the opportunities for team members to understand the complexity of this essence of CALI.

- **Leadership.** *It depends heavily on the leadership, heavily on the leadership.* As with most any initiative, in education, or in most any other field, great leadership will not guarantee success, but the lack thereof will likely doom the work to failure. With CALI, leadership at all levels - state, district, and school - fosters the sense of urgency CALI has

created, maintains accountability for the various components of CALI, has heart and passion for intended results, and garners the resources to power the Initiative.

With regard to state leadership, district staff who were interviewed at site visits, expressed appreciation for CSDE support of CALI implementation, as they forged ahead to break the barriers to student success. They commend state leadership and staff members for learning as they went along, being largely focused on the same results for student learning as local leaders were. District leaders were impressed with the state presence and advocacy with their local boards, and professional and broader communities, as well, in order to support the tough work, the fierce and laser focus on student learning.

With regard to local leadership, in each of the four districts visited, there was either a tenure of strong leadership, or more often, a new tide of Superintendents and Principals, serious and competent enough to drive this Initiative forward at a fast pace. As an example, respondents in one district described their new Superintendent with the following words: *focused, strong, organized, accountable, ethical, and transparent*. She is not enamored with excuses, with the cry to slow things down, or for that matter, with the desire for local control. In her mind, there is sound judgment at the state leadership level, economy of scale for a great deal of this work, and no time to waste to ameliorate the *institutionalized racism* she says is current – and soon to be past - practice in her district.

### **District Level Leadership**

*That is my vision here, to make all children achieve.*

Before CALI, one of the partner districts with new leadership acknowledged that there had been little leadership or movement for improving educational practice and hence little improvement in student achievement. *Are you kidding me? Because we never had professional development in our district prior to that....probably like five years where the teachers were getting professional development from the administrators who would quickly read a book and give it to them, so we are far behind for reason, okay? That's our history.* That wasn't the case everywhere, but in some districts at least, leadership had been a real need, and the new leaders had taken over by storm – welcomed by those who had the CALI vision.

The CSDE has stepped in when and where needed with strong action to support local decision making to stay the course with CALI. In one case, the state gave the local board a choice of two superintendent candidates, and told them to select one. In a second, where the local board was resisting allocating the match money for CALI participation, the Commissioner came to meet with the Board to demonstrate the importance of participation. In several other instances, where superintendents met with resistance from various factions of the community while implementing CALI strategies, the Commissioner came to meet with local school boards in order to

reinforce or support their direction. Districts appreciated having CSDE support, as expressed by one district leader who received a site visit. *Because for us, to be really honest about what our deficiencies are, is a little bit of a risk. To say that, you know, institutionally, we have some ethnic and racial practices that don't result in equal performance. So, the state attending the meetings, even though they didn't have to talk, but attending the board meeting where we have shared what our ultimate goal is was extremely valuable and appreciated.*

When the right person is in place, it is clear that the superintendent is role visionary, involved, and effective. *I think we have a superintendent who had a vision. She came in with what I felt was the heart and compassion to really try to improve student achievement and all these initiatives; she was trained in this herself.*

School faculties and consultants echoed these claims as they described how important it is for the principal to be first and foremost the instructional leader, in addition to serving the many other roles and responsibilities that come with the job.

What makes these strong leaders stand out is that they understand student learning, and they can influence their faculty to shift their ways of thinking and behaving. What was most impressive in many of the interviews is the moral compass that seems to loom beneath the surface of their daily commitment. They have an ethical purpose. They see school as the way to change the social order, to mend the fabric of their neighborhoods and beyond, to ensure that every child has an absolute opportunity to learn to the very highest of standards, and to succeed.

Superintendents and district staff recognized their school level principal and teacher leadership as critical to the actual implementation and sustainability of CALI. *I would have to give credit to the Principals and Department Heads who went to the training and then rolled this out in their building and in their departments with fidelity, because those people who were passionate about it went to the training, and felt that this really was going to make a difference, have made a concerted effort to support their teachers and to keep that process going forward.* As the evaluation moved into the second phase, and school site visits were conducted, additional information and examples were gathered to confirm the importance of this deep seated instructional leadership in CALI schools.

School site visits provided insight into effective leadership in the context of implementing data driven improvement. Principals in all four schools receiving site visits demonstrated particular strengths in a variety of contexts with quite different leadership styles. Two principals in larger secondary schools practiced distributive leadership creating structures using both formal administrative *triumvirates* and designated teacher leaders to support the work of Data Teams. One principal had an iron clad vision for student results, and showed how those results were realized through the course of this work. All principals were still working toward fidelity and struggling on some level to sustain the momentum of their implementation. What follows is a composite vignette of a CALI principal in the thick of this successful and challenging work.

## School Level Leadership

Now in their second year of serving as a Demonstration School, the administrative and teacher leadership of “Thatcher Elementary School” (fictional name) feel as if they are starting over and repeating their initial year. The principal explained, *We’re in our second year, but it should be our first; we’re just getting our feet wet – all over again!* Principal “Monica” (fictional name) is a very high energy, focused, warm, and hands-on instructional leader who holds high expectations of herself, and nothing less of anyone else. She has participated in much of the module training, leads the school Data Team, conducts classroom walk through’s as a general practice, and observes Instructional Data Teams as they meet and work. She leads a school with very impoverished, highly mobile, diverse, challenging learners. While instructional practices have changed, improved, turned around – changes in CMT scores have not demonstrated that learning has followed in measurable ways – yet. The school leaders are filled with hope that this next batch of scores will finally reflect positive shifts in the *way we do business now*.

Monica is delighted to have her school selected as a Demonstration School, greatly appreciates the additional resources and supports, but argues that two years is not enough, particularly given the circumstances around her faculty changes. She explained how just about 50% of her faculty turned over in the past two years. This was supposed to be transformation – not turnover – but the impact of the change is challenging for this school leader. Much of the module training and experience with Data Teams went out the door with the upwardly mobile professionals. Experienced faculty members went on to be principals, assistant principals, literacy coaches, and teachers in higher paying districts. *This is hard work. We lost a lot of people with a lot of training!*

*This takes time*, added her Executive Coach. *It is still in its infancy.* This is their fourth year of implementing Data Teams, and they acknowledge that this is a critical implementation year. This year, their Demonstration School funds are supporting their having consultants come in to the school for more focused training, based on their more sophisticated needs for content, content pedagogy, and more specific instructional strategies. Developing learning centers for differentiated instruction, vertical teaming, and specific work in literacy and math were mentioned as examples. *The CALI initiatives are all good, but all the PD I need for my staff is not delivered by CALI. CALI initiatives are good, but it’s like putting all our eggs in one basket. The CALI work is terrific, and there is a larger need for curricular support and content specific work. Comprehension right now is a big problem we have. All that we have to do in Kindergarten, first grade and second grade to get ready for third grade, when the testing begins is enormous! Right now K is spending a lot of time in fluency, letter recognition, beginning sounds – they need to be tackling comprehension!* She went on to say that they do have resources in the state to help them with that, but time, funding, and feasibility will only allow so much work; they can’t focus on everything at once. What would help would be a district level focus on comprehension, comprehensive PD - not only presentation – but embedded follow through, as well.

Both she and her Executive Coach describe Monica's leadership style really benefitting from the coaching, and from the encouragement of an experienced administrator serving as coach to take the hard road, rather than trying to make everyone in her school happy. She now has the laser focus, for sure, continuously supervising this important transformational work of Data Teams, and continually raising expectations for teachers, students, and herself. Prior to having an Executive Coach, the former literacy coach "coached" Monica to leave people alone – *They are all talented people who know how to teach.*" But even if that were true, when the talent force moved up and out, Monica was left with a new faculty that did not necessarily know what to do. So the Executive Coach helped her to adjust her style; now she is holding all teachers accountable in new ways. This caused some dissonance with staff, but scores were in a downward spiral, and she was distraught. *Some staff resent it, many realize that these expectations mean more work, but most are rising to the occasion.* Monica doesn't seem like a leader who was very laissez faire only a year ago; she is so focused, intentional, and present in the hard work of her school.

Scores have been on a downward trend for a few years now, but not when student clusters and cohorts are followed. About 30% of the students who took the test this year were not in this school last year, so the test, they feel, is not truly an accurate measure of the instructional effectiveness of this faculty, or of new measures that are taken to boost student achievement. When looking at cohorts, the results are a lot better according to the principal, but that is not what is measured for AYP.

What is different here now at this CALI Demonstration School? *CALI has made us very aware of what we are doing. We are more intentional, more aware, and far more focused. I used to "do it" but now I really need to be DOING IT THIS WAY! Teaching is far more open and collaborative. There used to be closed doors, and there wasn't as much support for teachers*

*So, you see [CALI] is here to stay. This work has really targeted our instruction – student work, patterns and trends. The Data Teams meet twice a week and there still just isn't enough time.*

The School Data Team meets once a month. Monica has given up faculty meeting for the Data Team, and conducts "faculty meeting" detail via e-mail and individual or small group meetings with teachers.

The best of school leadership involves not only the techniques of data driven improvement but the heart and moral purpose which bring its underlying motivation. *I love it! Oh, I just love [being a principal!] I love the kids! They're like a family to me, Monica says when she sums up her life as a principal. I do take seriously the work – [for us all collectively] to teach these children to read. Getting the rigor up. I thought we were working hard – not hard enough, not focused enough - we have to identify the skills. I have a very strong belief, from the bottom of my gut that all students can learn. They just have to be taught.*

In summary, data validated the importance of leadership and provided examples of effective leadership on the part of CSDE and a sample of partner districts and schools. However, of concern, there is agreement among most, that the leadership pool may be insufficient to take this work into the future. There were multiple instances of superintendents mentoring assistant superintendents and principals, teachers taking on new and emerging leading roles. The fear is that the pipeline is weak, however, not only in quantity, but in quality and potential. Many view these leading roles as demanding jobs with little recognition and reward. Also, professional mobility between and among districts is certainly problematic, particularly for struggling districts and schools. CSDE and partner districts will need to continue to be explicit and systematic in planning for leadership succession and build in incentives to encourage potential leaders to take on the challenge. It is not only districts that are subject to attrition of personnel and the effects that it can have on improvement initiatives like CALI. District leaders also thought about this in terms of state leadership. *I'm worried about what's going on at the State Department of Education. If they have a lot of retirees, are they going to still have the capacity and the institutional history to keep this going?* There is no question that leadership at all levels - state, district, and school - is critical in implementing and sustaining the CALI model. Strategies are needed to ensure that effective leaders are retained and new leaders are recruited in order to meet the demand.

- Culture change.** The four districts and the four schools that received site visits reported experiencing a substantial shift in the way they view, approach, and engage in their work, in large part, due to CALI, and in a broader sense because CALI represents their larger work of ensuring student learning success. Participants described these shifts across a spectrum of beliefs and behaviors: from a focus on adult oriented teaching<sup>5</sup> to one of student centered learning, from conceptions-based to more data-based decision making, from “private practice” to more open, transparent, and collaborative practice, from the way we’ve always done school to the way we’re doing school differently now, and much more.

**Culture Shift: A Critical Mid-Term Outcome**

*It took a long time to accept that, no, we're going to be doing school differently.*

Former District and School Culture	Shift to Newer Beliefs and Practices - Culture
Focus on adult centered inputs and outputs – “I taught it!”	Focus on student centered learning results – Did they learn it?
Concepts driven	Data driven
Private practice, “bunker mentality”	Collaborative, team practice
I’ve been teaching for 30 years	I’m learning something new each day
These kids can’t meet these standards	All students can learn to very high standards
This, too, shall pass; let’s wait it out	There is a sense of urgency; this isn’t going away
Raising student achievement is daunting, and will take 3 to 5 years	Change takes time, but there’ll be no change if we don’t begin with gusto now
Few consequences for low student achievement, particularly for teachers	Increased accountability and sanctions for not meeting AYP, shared ownership

<sup>5</sup> While this particular shift is away from adult oriented teaching to student centered learning, this should not be confused with the need to focus on changing adult behaviors in order to influence positive changes for students and student behaviors.

In the district site visits, members of District Data Teams also alluded to finding the work challenging. *It's the integration of the various components.* They expressed desire for support for the tough work of implementation at the school and classroom level, *the need that every District shouldn't have to kind of figure this out [on their own].* All of the four schools visited spoke of the importance of *doing business differently*, or doing *school differently*. Culture shift was huge at every school.

- **Human and fiscal resources.** CALI has been funded from several sources. Some state funding is provided, and federal funds are also used. The legislation required that a portion of the Education Cost Sharing (ECS) funding be set aside for school improvement. The Title I A set aside and Title I G funds have also been used. Through the consolidated application process, districts have the opportunity to coordinate funds in support of their district improvement plans. ARRA Stimulus Funds, School Improvement State Grants (SIG), and possible Race to the Top awards (RttT) are new, emerging, and potential sources that could be used to support CALI. Local funding also inevitably supports ongoing CALI implementation, and most communities that surround CALI schools are feeling strapped by the current economy.

Against the backdrop of how fiscal resources are currently provided, several issues emerged in the data. First, fiscal resources, both now and in the future, are viewed as unlikely to be sufficient, and second, maintenance of human resources over time is seen as challenging.

With regard to fiscal resources, while district leaders receiving site visits greatly appreciate the financial benefits of CALI, they fear for the future. In order for CALI to work, both state and local support need not only to continue but to increase. They are appreciative of CALI and of new stimulus money, but they fear it will not continue to be there at the levels needed in order to sustain this work, particularly in these current challenging economic times. This is a huge issue for them. They are poor districts in communities that are stretched, and they are being cut, reduced, challenged, at the same time that they know they need more in order to achieve equity. People are very concerned about funding, in general – local, state, and federal. Supports and resources breed the need for increased supports and resources. Experienced leaders understand that what has been done with CALI so far is the tip of the iceberg. While they appreciate the increased human, fiscal, and programmatic support for this imperative work, they also realize that there is much work to be done, the needs are immense, and this support will need to increase exponentially as it progresses. They are worried that what it will take may not be feasible, given the current economy. This deep concern was heard both at the district and at the school building levels.

*And we're under terrible, like everyone is, budget constraints. I mean, we started and one of the first things we had to [do] was lay off some people last year because the [local] budget had failed. But it's just been, it's really a difficult time to be coming in because you're trying to build. Our #1 goal on the district improvement plan is to hire and retain superior teachers, and we're turning around, and because of budget, laying people off.*

Fiscal resources are needed for many purposes in the CALI vision of practice—staffing, curriculum, professional development, assessment, data driven analysis team work, and more. School personnel, in particular, referenced not having enough time to actually make Data Teams work. Initially, substitutes for teachers to participate in module training was raised as an issue demanding more support; now substitutes to support teaches to engage in sufficient collaborative planning was an example often mentioned as a need.

With regard to human resources, a broad issue that emerged is how to keep trained and highly skilled staff in place. Districts receiving site visits expressed concern about developing staff able to implement the kind of educational program that CALI envisions only to then lose them. Funds are invested in people, and building the capacity of people with an assumption that the staff will remain in place to benefit the districts, is often not borne out in fact. This surfaced as an issue at the district level, and was seen in action at one of the schools visited, in particular, where nearly 50% of the staff had moved on to other positions for reasons of job enhancement.

*I have a salary schedule. We had a 20-year veteran teacher who finally said “I have to go to [another wealthier district] for \$10,000 more a year.” And this was maybe 10 years ago and she sent me their salary schedule for my information. That same teacher sent me the current one and we are regressing rather than catching up... (District Leader)*

To the extent that wealthier districts can offer higher salaries and provide opportunities for these skilled individuals has the effect of undoing work that has been done and derailing improvement momentum in more poverty stricken partner districts.

*We lose teachers consistently and so we pour two, three, four years of training into them and then they're gone and then we start all over again. We did a study ...a five year period ... the figures [showed] 80 percent of our new hires had left us already. That's a huge resource loss.*

## **Putting it all Together**

To summarize discussion to this point, evaluation data have been organized and discussed to provide a window in the core practices of at the Instructional Data Team level and to illustrate some of the primary systemic supports for implementation and sustainability. While these have been pulled apart for analytic purposes, in reality all these factors co-occur and are operating at the same time. This dynamic, inter-related nature of change is illustrated in the vignette below, and carries a clear message of the enormity of work undertaken, the undaunted leadership and commitment, and the need for final supports to push over the line to success.

### **Change in Action**

Teacher and administrative leaders at Patterson High School (fictional name) now in their fifth year of CALI implementation have learned a number of things. Implementing with

fidelity what is needed to realize an ambitious agenda takes a determination that staying the course results in better outcomes for students, and a tenacious focus on the strategies at play. Aligning the various lanes on the highway - in this case high school reform, PBS, PLC's, CALI – trumps whining about too many initiatives. Changing adult behaviors, redesigning critical structures that support or hinder systemic change, and recognizing that this work takes time, money and faculty buy-in – all of which you may or may not have - are all essential elements of successful and sustainable implementation. Oh, and did we say in the first few words – a healthy dose of both teaching and administrative leadership is essential for the learning.

The Principal's number one goal these days is getting everyone to fidelity of implementation. All the pieces are in place and in play, but they need to stay the course in order to believe that this work is here to stay and will sustain itself as key leaders retire or move on. He speaks articulately about both the successes and the challenges, as he sees them. He has been here from the beginning. This was the first school in the district to come on board with CALI. *We jumped on early. I and the administrative team piloted the first data driven decision making group. We had one teacher from each department and we created data walls!* They later moved to course-specific and department Data Teams, and have continued to tweak this and other structures over time.

High School Reform was already spurring a number of different initiatives, including smoother 9<sup>th</sup> grade transitions, career academies, individual student success plans, alternative pathways, and smaller learning communities – all a part of the Commissioner's statewide High School Reform Initiative at that time. Soon thereafter, CALI was introduced, and they seized the opportunities to merge the two efforts. Also within the five year implementation period, they were implementing Positive Behavior Support programs, and Professional Learning Communities, both of which helped them to take a serious look at changing culture and adult behaviors in the teaching and learning process. While it took some effort, PHS is now fully accredited by NEASC, school accreditation by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges – no small feat, as most high school faculties would attest.

The School Data Team, formerly the Department Head Counsel – transformed now, new and improved - described with great detail how aligning these efforts was absolutely necessary to get their school to scale, and how they could see that the work was complementary rather than competitive. They just needed to convince their peers of that. And according to most, they now have about 85% buy-in and participation by staff. There has been a fair amount of turnover, some by disgruntled staff, resigning with an *I'll show you* attitude. This school leader and company have used the opportunity to attract and hire a rather unusual mix of younger and energetic talents – ranging from those with recent experience working with private assessment/curriculum companies, to technical assistance providers, to teaching at younger grade levels – all of whom have come without the baggage of the recently departed, and all of whom are firmly on board with this new work. *Changing adult behaviors [in relation to student behaviors] in this school was like moving mountains! Moving mountains!*

Structures needed to change in order to make way for doing business differently at PHS. Here are some of the ways the leadership shifted resources and supports. They revamped the entire school schedule, re-designed the use of faculty meeting time, and re-wrote their mission statement to reflect their new directions. Previously, throughout the district, district and school leadership had not taken full advantage of what was allowed within the teacher contract. This was tough to change, but the district prevailed. At the high school, the contract allowed four meetings plus a faculty meeting per month – so they allocated four for CALI Data Team meetings. They also had not utilized time before school, and now they were instituting more formal structures to allow faculty to schedule time with individual students who needed additional supports. *It used to be teachers doing their own thing.* Teachers taught five periods per day, with five duties and five prep periods per week. They took away one duty (such as study hall) per week in order to allow for Data Team meetings, and gave teachers an additional prep period, so that they would only have three duties, six preps (some with common planning time with teams) and a formal Data Team time.

Academically, they were moving away from traditional courses and departments and into various academy structures for students; one ninth grade academy, and then three vertical academies for grades 10, 11, and 12, geared to enhance rigor, relevance, and relationships and a more authentic curriculum. They engage in far more interdisciplinary work. The faculty leadership also embraced and supported differentiated instruction, and PLC's were engaged in reading and thinking together about major educational research studies. The administrative team PLC was reading Michael Fullen's "Breakthroughs" at the time of the site visit.

There have been multiple challenges along the way, but clearly, the leadership seems to have faced, embraced, and met head on much of what has gotten in the way. Working closely in the daily supervision and assessment of teachers has been one challenge, along with not having the capacity to generate the right [disaggregated] data for the Data Teams. *We have great Data Teams without great data! That's a major frustration!* When he describes with detail some of what he really needs, he is describing what would be there for him/them if PHS were a Demonstration school! What he really needs is more help with [non-evaluative] supervision of teachers, more help supporting the many Data Teams, and more resources to provide what the teams need once team members gain increased clarity of what they need for teaching and learning through the Data Team process. Sounds like Demonstration school supports! *We feel we're really pushing the envelope, and we are!*

There remains some tension between the union representation and the administration, and that seems to be disconcerting to the principal. They needed to put two teachers on "professional assistance" this year. (Two other teachers' contracts were not renewed in the past three years.) There used to be three tiers to the district evaluation system, but – another structural change – now there are two tiers. Teachers are either making it or they are not. While the district and school union representatives do embrace CALI, they feel that the administration is too top down and not *collaborative*, as they perceive it to be in other districts and schools across the state. Actually, there is consensus in this view –

both the school and the union leadership agree that this is not entirely a collaborative venture. The administrative leadership feels that PHS would not be where they are now if they hadn't stormed ahead with some of this laser like focus, and they fear that in the beginning, it wouldn't have happened with increased *collaboration* – there would have been resistance – or it just would have taken a lot more time than it actually did. They continually built critical mass, and now this particular union voice is something of a minority voice in this school.

Two years ago, the CAPT scores took a significant jump up – nearly enough to make safe harbor – and then they *lost a little ground*, and seem now to have flat lined. They are seeing improvements in their own district and school data, and are hopeful about the next round of state testing data. On the other hand, like many dedicated professionals, they are their own worst critics, and tend to see most clearly what they have not yet accomplished. District leaders agree that this data work requires constant diligence and supervision, the very supervision the principal knows they need, or data groups will have the tendency to return to what was once comfortable and familiar, slip back, and not maintain their focus on the multi-step DDDM process as designed. When this happens, data work can become mere planning time, lose its integrity, and not reach or sustain fidelity.

Over the past year or two, however, individuals and teams have returned from statewide meetings where they have networked with other high schools. *We came back feeling a lot better about who we are and what we're doing... They got confirmation that they are ahead of the curve, moving in the right direction. We're certainly light-years ahead of where we were. We got the initial bump, but our work now is to be implementing with greater fidelity.*

## **A Point in Time**

As findings in the inputs/resources, outputs, and short term outcomes sections of the report indicate, CSDE has done an exceptional job of designing and developing CALI and taking it through the initial activities related to implementation. While “initial,” these activities represent a tremendous amount of hard work on the part of the SEA, the RESC Alliance and SERC, the districts and schools. Services have been provided as intended and the short term outcomes of awareness and buy-in have been achieved.

At this point in time, CSDE may ask itself where CALI lives in the Theory of Action: in the inputs, outputs and short term outcomes? Or in the actual orchestrated practices that represent data driven improvement at the mid-term stage, the achievement of which are represented in fidelity and effectiveness of implementation at the school level? It may be tempting to rest on laurels and leave the remaining work to the RESC Alliance and SERC and to districts. But it may also be possible to facilitate and guide implementation; to accomplish efficiencies of scale, with one more push of state support in partnership with the Alliance and districts. Some specific recommendations will be provided in the final section of the evaluation report, but first, discussion of long term outcomes.

## Theory of Action: Long-term Outcomes

### Overview of Findings Related to the Theory of Action

Long term outcomes expected from CALI implementation include indicators of student achievement, changed organizational cultures, and increased capacity. In general, long term outcomes are just beginning to appear. There is some anecdotal evidence of change in hoped for directions, yet the work of implementation at the mid-term outcome level must be completed before this can become widespread.

- **Change in school and district culture—adult behaviors and expectations support and reinforce student achievement.** There has been much progress here, with the widespread recognition that in order for students to achieve academic success, adult learning and leading behaviors need to change. Significant movement has occurred and is taking shape in this area, described in greater detail in the section on mid-term outcomes.
- **School and district leaders have capacity to lead.** Again, a great deal of strong district and school leadership was observed— much of it “new hires” during CALI – assuming the big work of leading faculties and staff in new ways toward greater student success. This will take tenure, fortitude, incentives, and new mentoring in order to sustain the critical mass of leadership needed to continue to create and sustain the capacity needed for CALI implementation with fidelity.
- **Increases in student achievement as measured by CAPT and CMT.** While there is some movement toward increased student achievement, particularly in certain districts and in some Demonstration Schools, there are not measurable gains as needed across the 15 partner schools at this time. Much of the practice remains in mid-term implementation and outcomes.
- **Reduction or elimination of achievement gaps.** As above, schools are working toward these ends, but the data are not here at this time for the majority of partner schools.
- **Fewer referrals to Special Education, fewer dropouts, fewer discipline referrals, increased attendance.** Many of the CALI districts and schools make claims that their local data support that they are at least in the early stages of achieving these outcomes. The evaluation did not gather their district or school based data; however, many members of the District and School Data Teams reported seeing some early or new trends in these areas – perhaps foreshadowing more substantial student learning gains and more summative evidence of increased achievement, decreased achievement gaps in future years.

As a general statement of findings in this section, it seems that some long-term outcomes are being achieved in some schools, but not at a widespread level. At the time of the site visits of four districts, 2009 state testing data were not yet available, and leaders were eager to see their results. School visits occurred during the winter, early in 2010, and many were eagerly awaiting and optimistic about the 2010 data. Many were quick to reject seeing themselves in the long-term

outcomes camp, and most are not there yet. However, many of the principals during both the district and school visits cited compelling student learning data to support activity and impact in that domain – just not the CMT/CAPT testing.

*We work as hard as we can and we still look bad! Not making AYP.* This school has seen a steady gains trend, but not enough to make AYP, as the Principal said here.

*We're still not where we need to be. And I think we're seeing results at the high school. Our CAPT scores and, knock on wood, you're only as good as your last CAPT scores or CMT scores, but last year they went up 10% straight across the board. We're hoping to see another increase in that. Our referral data is going down. We're reducing suspensions. (Principal)*

The surveys of all districts and schools corroborated that long-term outcomes are not yet appearing on a wide scale. Lower average responses for items on long-term outcomes were found than on short and mid-term outcomes and there was a higher percentage of missing or “Don’t know” responses (statistically significant) on items related to long term outcomes than any other part of the survey.

While many were eager to see the *next set of data*, and hoping for the best, significant results for most of the districts and schools visited are not achieved yet, not being realized as quickly as embracing the work, changing practices, and implementing the Data Team structures.

Common threads in the success stories of site visits are (1) smooth “alignment” of multiple initiatives focused on student achievement, (2) time/tenure – most of the schools in the first 12 CALI districts have been at this work for three to five years. Finally, (3) leadership – strong leadership, albeit very different styles and approaches to leading this work, needs to be in place, and is in place in most of the districts and schools we visited. Combined with the commitment and urgency expressed by district leaders, this bodes well for achievement of long term outcomes in the near future.

## CONCLUSIONS

This section presents summary responses to each of the evaluation questions and provides commendations and recommendations to CSDE for continuing to implement CALI.

### Evaluation Question #1

***To what extent and degree of fidelity is CALI being implemented at the district and school level in districts identified as in need of improvement, corrective action, or restructuring under NCLB?***

At the district level, leaders have worked in earnest and have made progress in reaching fidelity. The 15 partner districts are knowledgeable of CALI, buy in to the CALI model as a viable way to bring about school and district improvement, and have participated in CALI activities to a degree of depth. Some major components, such as the Cambridge Education reviews and the development and approval of District Improvement Plans have been completed. It is fair to say that the state has been untiring in its efforts to implement CALI, and that the RESC Alliance and SERC and district leaders have stepped up to the plate in the spirit of partnership to work together. All CALI stakeholders should feel very good about what they have accomplished.

Fidelity of implementation is a large issue at the school level simply because it is in the interactions of teachers and students in classrooms that improvement will ultimately happen or not happen. This is the real arena of change and the partnership between districts and their schools still has a road to walk in reaching fidelity in using data-driven improvement. Questions for further investigation in this second phase of data collection focused on whether schools in partner districts have implemented the CALI vision of practice and what the factors are that explain fidelity of implementation or lack thereof at the school level. There was evidence that many CALI school teachers and staff members are working diligently toward implementing CALI with fidelity. One principal even described *fidelity of implementation* as the major work at his school now that the foundation is laid. Our evaluation field work has indicated that CALI fidelity at the school level as the main feature, the make or break factor in whether the data driven decision making process that underlies the CALI model, reaches fruition or not. There was evidence that productive school level practices can be in place without the actual specific CALI branded services and activities, as long as the instructional effectiveness is achieved through the Data Team work. Districts and schools have found success along the road to full implementation following the CALI path or charting some evidence-based alternative pathways.

Implementation fidelity is the “proof of the pudding” for this work and some of the Demonstration Schools have come closer to the that fidelity, due to the critical addition of embedded resources and services created in the model, than the majority of non-Demonstration CALI schools. Some of the schools that have been at this work now for five or more years are hopeful that this year (Spring 2010) might be the coveted “tipping point” for their CAPT/CMT scores and their AYP data; yet hope alone is not enough. While so much progress has been made and such good work has been done, implementation science research tells us – and Doug Reeves continues to remind the Connecticut audience - that this is the work that takes time, with careful attention to the particular configuration of innovation strategies employed, constant monitoring of

fidelity, adjusting, coaching, assessing, reflecting, redirecting, refocusing, and reinvesting. This is the big work. While well on the road to implementation fidelity, all are not there at this point in time.

## Commendations

- **CALI is well underway!** While this report shows that many of the CALI partner schools are deep into the mid-term work of implementation, and working hard to gain fidelity and sustainability, they are that far along. They have managed to access and make use of the various inputs, resources, services, and activities of the initiative, to align these well with one another within their contexts in order to create the setting for implementation.
- **Partners form a strong foundation for a statewide system of support.** The CSDE has worked in successful collaboration with its partners - the RESC SERC Alliance, the CAS, the professional statewide Teacher Unions, and their partner districts and schools - to create, adjust, and to support the CALI model, the necessary inputs, resources, supports and activities that have built such a strong foundation to the statewide Initiative.
- **Quality assurance collaboration begins.** The CSDE has established a Quality Assurance Workgroup to continue the work of the partnership described above to improve upon the quality, communication, and accountability of the work of the partner districts.
- **Data showcases provide networking opportunities.** Five annual “Data Showcase” Conferences have convened partner and other district and school personnel for the purposes of exchanging best practices, networking, and learning.
- **CSDE celebrates and honors success.** “Celebrating Stories of Success” celebrated the particular strengths and journeys of the “Fabulous 15” partner districts; the Commissioner and invited dignitaries joined in the evening celebration to honor the districts.
- **CSDE extends supports to Demonstration Schools.** Continuing to support the current cadre of Demonstration Schools rather than starting to support new schools is a wise decision, and will be greatly appreciated by the current group.

## Recommendations

RMC suggests that CSDE consider the following as it provides on-going support for reaching fidelity of implementation of the CALI vision of practice. These recommendations focus on establishing implementation support that is intensive enough to strengthen data use and instructional practices at the district, school, and classroom levels.

- **Continue to take steps to get maximum power from the RESC Alliance and SERC, as well as CAS, and other CALI Partners:** The Alliance is a significant asset as a delivery system for CALI. The Alliance, CAS, and others house a good portion of the leadership, intelligence, professional development capacity, and a solid basis of structure and relationships needed to continue to support CALI. Work to reinvest some of the

start-up resources into implementation support for schools and Data Teams. Work with District, Alliance, and CAS leadership to think through implementation science, CBAM, and other research based work in order to design ways to provide more embedded supports to schools through the various stages of implementation in addition to continuing the professional development delivery system and various school and district supports.

- **Provide guidance on resources to support reaching fidelity of implementation at the school and classroom levels:** This report reflects many concerns on availability of resources, both fiscal and human. Based on the experience with Demonstration Schools and conversations with district and school leaders in each district, CSDE should offer guidance in determining what resources are needed for what purpose and how funds can be obtained. This would include exploring use of Stimulus Funds, SIG funds, and the possibility of RttT funds and the coordination of existing local, state and federal funding streams. This may require changing the way that federal and state funds are currently used in order to align to the CALI vision.
- **Support partner schools to reach a level of sustainability before extending CALI services to all Connecticut schools.** Support the CALI partner districts and schools to maintain their progress toward full implementation and demonstrate their success prior to rolling this out to all schools. If supports to partner schools are insufficient, those schools will be at risk of failing. They are by definition the toughest schools to achieve full student achievement. Invest in these schools to make it through this tough implementation stage successfully, and then demonstrate that CALI will work for any school.

## Evaluation Question #2

*Do the components/interventions support each other? If so, how, and to what degree?*

The CALI components and interventions support one another in the model as designed: use of the Cambridge Education reviews for districts to understand current status, write and implement aligned improvement plans at the district and school level to address needs for improvement and build on strengths; make data central at each decision-making level from instructional teams up. As conceptualized, the CALI components and interventions are cohesive and coherent.

At the district level, leaders see CALI as a system, with interdependent and connecting components, although views differ on this at the school level. Some feel that CALI is a coherent, cohesive program, and others do not. It appears that it might be as coherent as the local implementers play it out to be, make it their own design, customize it, and communicate it. Most of the weight of on-going implementation begun by the training modules is carried by embedded support received after participation in training. Continuing to build and strengthen local capacity to implement CALI with fidelity is the focus for most of the 15 CALI districts at this time.

Also, districts and schools are more successful when they are able to align not only these CALI components, but also other initiatives they are implementing and supporting at the local level, such as PBS or PLCs. Where these other programs are blended in with the CALI components,

and viewed as one cohesive effort, it works. Where the various efforts or components are treated as independent initiatives, educators lose focus, become overwhelmed, and are not successful.

## Commendations

- **Districts and schools have made it work!** Either by strict adherence to the original design and theory, or through flexible use of resources and urgency, CALI districts and schools are making this work.
- **CSDE has worked to consolidate CALI components.** No new modules were added this year, and the Quality Assurance group has focused their work on Data Teams and SRBI as the backbone of CALI. CSDE has worked to create a message that other modules support the DDDM team work, and the work to provide instruction in regular classrooms.

## Recommendations

RMC offers the following recommendations on increasing cohesiveness and coherence of CALI.

- **Continue to think deeper, not broader:** District leaders expressed a clear concern about adding too much to CALI. CSDE should continue to avoid the temptation to add modules as new initiatives come up or to attempt to cover all perspectives, issues, or concerns within CSDE. Adding too much will result in diluting the central messages and ultimately reducing the extent to which the components support each other, as they become a collection rather than a system. The Module Training is especially vulnerable to this kind of proliferation.
- **Market a big CALI message:** CSDE should distill the few big ideas that underlie CALI and develop a plan to market them. Stakeholders in districts, schools, and communities can easily lose track of main ideas if they are not presented in multiple formats and reinforced. It's not understating to say that the CALI vision needs to be sold and resold, explained and re-explained, applied and reapplied to all who have a stake in its success.
- **Design a system for Demonstration Schools to show how it works:** The Demonstration Schools are an excellent opportunity to show people what CALI ultimately means for schools and students – particularly the schools that have met AYP goals. CSDE should consider them part of the marketing strategy and outline a series of strategies for how they can be used to create awareness of what CALI ultimately leads to and as models that can form a basis of technical assistance. Also the system should include a plan for how districts can use their Demonstration Schools to model and network within district, as well.
- **Continue to celebrate successes.** One district suggested that successes should be celebrated along the way, and this is good advice. The state has held annual conferences where successes and challenges have been recognized and this is wise. CSDE should continue to make it part of its leadership function to identify and celebrate progress in an on-going fashion. It is also effective to share good news on a broad scale as a part of

marketing the CALI vision. Capturing and documenting success builds momentum and creates energy and enthusiasm to go on.

- **Switch the orientation of CALI from state down to student up:** As an artifact of how it was by necessity created and implemented, CALI has the feel of being a top down state to district to school initiative that relies on trickle down, and in fact, this was appreciated by some district leaders. Now that CALI is over the hump of initial efforts, however, part of the CALI message might emphasize that it is about nested layers of support. Students are in the center and it works from the student level up. Instructional Teams ensure that each student receives the support s/he needs; schools ensure that teachers have the support they need; the district supports its schools and the state supports districts. CSDE may want to consider changing the orientation in this fashion, while still maintaining the urgency and accountability that is greatly appreciated.
- **Cast the nets to communities beyond education, and broaden the dialog to more than education:** These recommendations began by suggesting that the CSDE consider going deeper, rather than broader. One exception to this might be the scope of the conversation. This is big work, tough work, timely work, and educators cannot go it alone. The roots of inequity reach much deeper than schooling, and the complex work of unraveling them require leadership from the Governor's Office, Human Services, Health, Children, Youth and Family Services, and so on. As long as towns and communities reflect vast differences in opportunity, so will learning. Superintendents interviewed for the evaluation were passionate about the possibility of this statewide dialog.

### Evaluation Question #3

#### *What impact is CALI having on district, school, teacher, and student performance?*

This evaluation provides a lot of encouragement for what has been accomplished to date. Districts view CSDE staff as effective in creating and supporting the CALI model. Short-term outcomes have largely been accomplished, and work is active to achieve and build upon mid-term outcomes. It is too soon to expect impact on performance or to investigate it in a rigorous way. There is anecdotal evidence of improvement in particular situations, and that is encouraging. There is evidence of some schools improving and that is also encouraging. Based on 2009 testing, five schools from partner districts (including three Demonstration Schools) were removed from In Need of Improvement Status. Thirty four schools (including nine Demonstration Schools) of the 194 under In Need of Improvement Status in 2008 made Safe Harbor or AYP in 2009.

#### **Commendations**

- **Commissioner support stays the course.** The Commissioner, in addressing the partner schools at the spring 2010 CALI Celebration, confirmed his commitment to CALI and to the CALI schools. All Connecticut schools will become a part of the work, and no new initiatives will supersede continuing through with this important work of CALI.

- **Clusters of CALI schools have made AYP.** With CALI supports aligned with district and school initiatives, some schools have made AYP and are no longer in need of improvement. Schools are optimistic that the 2010 data will continue with this trend.

## Recommendations

RMC offers the following recommendations regarding impact on district, school, teacher, and student performance:

- **Stay the course.** In the data collected for this report, there were many instances of district leaders asking CSDE to stay the course, keep going, do not stop and then switch to something else. While it is good news for CSDE that districts feel this way, this will be a very challenging recommendation to address. In education, the context continually changes. New state or federal legislation and/or new leadership almost always bring new initiatives or requirements that states and district have to react to. This often has the effect of pulling attention away from, or even derailing, on-going work. To avoid this, CSDE leadership at the highest level should look at every new initiative or requirement and ask how it can contribute to CALI. Do any of the requirements or selection criteria for Race to the Top funds have implications for CALI? For example, can revision of standards to international benchmarks clarify learning targets to benefit CALI, can eliminating barriers to linking teacher evaluation to student performance create dialog that promotes CALI goals, etc. Can the competition on state longitudinal data systems help create a better basis for CALI? Can the CSDE sponsor the development and implementation of a statewide education data warehouse? Staying the course ultimately requires the state to develop the ability not just to address new requirements and initiatives, but to integrate them into existing work and support.
- **Use TAST to its fullest potential.** The TAST database is under revision and redesign as an existing tool for collecting information on CALI. One interviewee raised the possibility that services could be linked to performance. CSDE should consider if there are relatively, simple, cost-effective ways that TAST could be used as a source of data on the results of services provided.

## Summary

CALI is a wonderful model. It is likely that few states have created a statewide system of support that is as comprehensive, as well thought out, and as intensive in what it has done as CALI. But CSDE cannot rest on its laurels. The challenges of getting fidelity down to the classroom level, keeping and building the CALI focus are significant. All CSDE, partner agencies, and district staff who participated in this evaluation expressed commitment, integrity and a lot of heart to meet these challenges. Keep working together and never give up.

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**APPENDICES:**

Appendix A: Percent of students scoring at Goal level or higher on 2008 CMT assessments in the 15 CALI districts

Appendix B: Percentage of students meeting Goal or higher on the 2008 CAPT assessments in the 15 CALI districts

Appendix C: CALI Theory of Action: supporting districts as the primary agent of change

Appendix D: District and School Site Visit Protocols

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Appendix A: Percent of students scoring at Goal  
level or higher on 2008 CMT  
assessments in the 15 CALI districts

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**Appendix A: Percent of students scoring at Goal level or higher on 2008 CMT assessments in the 15 CALI districts**

<b>Grade and CMT Subject Area</b>	<b>Ansonia</b>	<b>Bridgeport</b>	<b>Danbury</b>	<b>East Hartford</b>	<b>Hartford</b>	<b>Meriden</b>	<b>Middletown</b>	<b>State</b>
Grade 3 Reading	40.5	21.0	38.8	26.0	16.4	31.5	51.5	<b>52.0</b>
Mathematics	58.3	28.0	53.8	36.9	22.7	38.1	53.4	<b>60.0</b>
Grade 4 Reading	53.6	24.2	46.4	31.8	16.8	37.2	54.7	<b>55.9</b>
Mathematics	78.5	28.7	60.0	36.6	23.4	46.9	52.4	<b>60.3</b>
Grade 5 Reading	47.8	26.9	57.9	36.4	22.1	41.2	65.4	<b>62.2</b>
Mathematics	69.7	32.8	70.8	39.0	28.7	47.0	65.0	<b>65.9</b>
Grade 6 Reading	49.5	32.8	54.2	39.4	32.3	44.1	61.1	<b>66.3</b>
Mathematics	54.1	35.7	58.0	32.8	31.2	43.6	62.7	<b>66.4</b>
Grade 7 Reading	49.3	40.9	61.2	41.8	38.2	50.5	58.3	<b>71.1</b>
Mathematics	38.0	28.9	57.5	28.3	24.2	40.3	48.7	<b>63.0</b>
Grade 8 Reading	49.8	32.0	52.9	39.8	27.8	40.5	50.3	<b>64.8</b>
Mathematics	48.5	23.6	44.8	35.3	21.7	31.6	45.7	<b>60.8</b>

<b>Grade and CMT Subject Area</b>	<b>New Britain</b>	<b>New Haven</b>	<b>New London</b>	<b>Norwalk</b>	<b>Norwich</b>	<b>Stamford</b>	<b>Waterbury</b>	<b>Windham</b>	<b>State</b>
Grade 3 Reading	19.8	20.5	20.0	43.3	34.8	48.2	27.8	24.6	<b>52.0</b>
Mathematics	28.0	36.3	26.5	58.2	41.1	54.1	41.2	30.5	<b>60.0</b>
Grade 4 Reading	20.0	28.2	19.8	44.7	37.6	48.7	31.5	26.3	<b>55.9</b>
Mathematics	24.3	36.6	11.4	50.4	42.3	56.2	43.1	35.1	<b>60.3</b>
Grade 5 Reading	29.6	29.9	34.5	55.8	49.3	58.4	38.2	24.2	<b>62.2</b>
Mathematics	31.9	36.7	37.9	56.9	52.6	62.7	46.4	23.6	<b>65.9</b>
Grade 6 Reading	30.5	38.2	36.9	50.7	47.7	57.4	35.5	28.2	<b>66.3</b>
Mathematics	32.8	42.2	32.1	46.5	44.2	53.8	34.8	27.7	<b>66.4</b>
Grade 7 Reading	33.6	42.1	33.0	63.1	60.1	66.7	39.7	37.4	<b>71.1</b>
Mathematics	27.7	32.3	21.9	55.0	49.5	53.0	28.3	28.5	<b>63.0</b>
Grade 8 Reading	28.1	33.9	21.0	57.5	47.9	57.2	34.9	30.4	<b>64.8</b>
Mathematics	21.1	33.2	20.9	51.5	49.1	49.0	24.0	26.5	<b>60.8</b>

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Appendix B: Percentage of students meeting Goal  
or higher on the 2008 CAPT  
assessments in the 15 CALI districts

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***Appendix B: Percentage of students meeting Goal or higher on the 2008 CAPT assessments in the 15 CALI districts***

	CAPT Content Area			
	Reading	Writing	Math	Science
Ansonia	29.8	34.5	25.0	32.0
Bridgeport	11.9	16.0	10.3	8.3
Danbury	36.2	46.0	32.5	31.3
East Hartford	15.6	33.2	21.2	21.1
Hartford	11.0	22.9	13.7	11.4
Meriden	22.9	30.5	25.7	23.4
Middletown	31.8	53.1	31.4	34.3
New Britain	17.1	25.0	14.4	13.4
New Haven	16.7	26.4	15.4	15.5
New London	12.0	25.5	11.0	16.0
Norwalk	30.9	47.9	37.8	32.4
Norwich	0.0	4.8	12.5	16.0
Stamford	35.2	47.3	37.4	32.4
Waterbury	15.2	29.0	14.3	14.8
Windham	26.5	33.2	33.8	27.9
<b>State</b>	<b>45.5</b>	<b>57.9</b>	<b>50.1</b>	<b>46.3</b>

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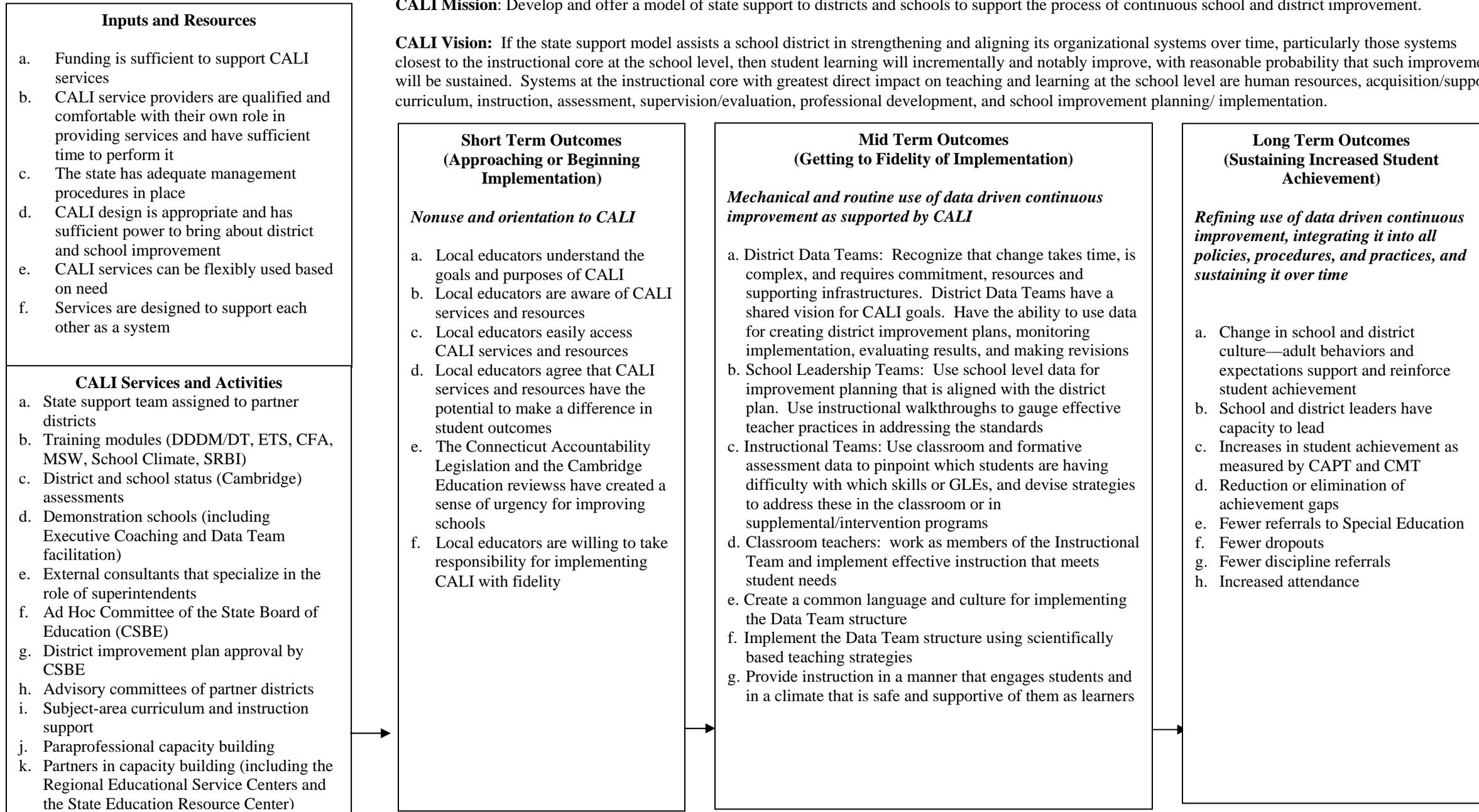
Appendix C: CALI Theory of Action: supporting  
districts as the primary agent of change

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# CALI THEORY OF ACTION: SUPPORTING DISTRICTS AS THE PRIMARY AGENT OF CHANGE

**CALI Mission:** Develop and offer a model of state support to districts and schools to support the process of continuous school and district improvement.

**CALI Vision:** If the state support model assists a school district in strengthening and aligning its organizational systems over time, particularly those systems closest to the instructional core at the school level, then student learning will incrementally and notably improve, with reasonable probability that such improvement will be sustained. Systems at the instructional core with greatest direct impact on teaching and learning at the school level are human resources, acquisition/support, curriculum, instruction, assessment, supervision/evaluation, professional development, and school improvement planning/ implementation.



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Appendix D: District and School Site Visit  
Protocols

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## Appendix D: District and School Site Visit Protocols

### CALI Evaluation District Site Visit Protocol May, 2009

#### Prior to the Site Visits:

- CSDE staff will notify the district of selection
- Edie will follow up to schedule, establishing who the main point of contact is at the district level (likely Advisory Committee member with highest rank), providing and adapting the agenda for the visit Districts can flexibly arrange these components as suits their schedule, so long as all the pieces are addressed), securing meeting space for the site visitors during breaks and lunch (it is ideal if food and water can be provided so site visitors can use this for work time and to talk privately) and securing directions to the district office.
- RMC will collect the following information on each district
  - Telephone interview of the CSDE lead consultant; former superintendents
  - Telephone interview of the RESC service provider
  - Document review: Cambridge Education LLC assessment; District Improvement Plan; Strategic School Profile; any docs that the CSDE lead consultant or RESC provider suggests.

#### At the Site Visit

##### Schedule and Protocol

**8:30-9:00** Initial Meeting with Advisory Committee Member (contact person)

Purpose: To go over agenda and logistics for the day; preview space; set up equipment; answer any questions the district may have.

**9:00-10:00** Group Interview with Advisory Board members and the Superintendent

Purpose: To understand the perspective of district leadership on CALI

Preamble: Thank you for taking time to talk with us this morning. We are from RMC Research Corporation, and this site visit is part of the CALI evaluation sponsored by the state. The purpose of the evaluation is to provide data to the CSDE so that they can (1) understand what makes CALI work—or what stands in its way of being an effective means of supporting identified districts and schools and (2) improve the CALI system over time.

This is not an evaluation of your district.

We will be audio recording our conversation today for the sake of the completeness of notes. No one other than RMC staff will hear recordings or see transcripts and data will not be identified with you personally.

## Appendix D: District and School Site Visit Protocols

In the next hour, we would like to get a general understanding of the CALI “story” here in \_\_\_\_\_. This big picture understanding will help us as we dig deeper in an interview with the district Data Team and end the day by talking with principals to understand the user perspective of CALI support.

### Protocol:

#### (1) The big picture, or the story

- With regard to supporting your identified schools, what were your practices, policies and procedures like prior to CALI work that began with the Cambridge Education reviews and after it?
- In general terms, what are the structures that CALI has put in place?
- How far does CALI reach—within the district office and beyond it?

#### (2) Inputs, resources, components

- What has the state done to make your use of CALI easy or difficult?
- What support has the RESC Alliance and SERC provided in implementing CALI? How helpful, useful has that assistance been?
- To what extent have you successfully built capacity of your own staff to implement CALI?
- What is your view of the various CALI components as a system? How do these CALI components, as a system, fit with one another? Work for your district?
- How do CALI supports for identified schools fit your needs, or the goals your district is working on?

#### (3) Outcomes and impact

- What are the factors that make your district able to access, with ease or success, CALI support?
- What are your CALI implementation successes?
- What have been the challenges in implementing CALI?
- What student learning, teaching quality, organizational systemic results are you seeing thus far?

#### (4) Reflection

- What are your early hunches about CALI – where it will push envelopes, where it will fall down or fail, what will continue to stay in place and move forward, what do they think they need?
- In what ways could the CALI design be improved?

**10:00-10:30 Break**

## Appendix D: District and School Site Visit Protocols

**10:30-12:30** Group Interview with the District Data Team (district contact person will be asked to select a representative sample of 6-8 people from the Data Team, fairly evenly balanced between district and school level members.)

Purpose: To understand what the District Data Team believes it has accomplished, what has enabled its successes, what challenges and barriers it has encountered.

Preamble: Thank you for taking a few minutes to meet with us today. We are from RMC Research Corporation and are conducting this site visit as part of the CALI evaluation. The purpose of the evaluation is to provide data to the CSDE so that they can (1) understand what makes CALI work—or what stands in its way of being an effective manner of supporting identified districts and schools and (2) improve the CALI system over time. This is not an evaluation of your district. We have already spoken to district leaders to gain a broad understanding of how CALI has functioned in your district. We have learned [summary statement here]. In this conversation, we want to dig deeper and test out a CALI theory of action with regard to your experiences as the Data Team. We will audio record the conversation for the sake of completeness of notes. No one other than RMC staff will hear the recording or see the transcriptions. What you say will not be personally identified with you.

### Protocol:

#### (1) The big picture, or the story

- What would you like to add to the CALI story in \_\_\_\_\_, as I just described it?

#### (2) Inputs, resources, components

- In our CALI theory of action, a starting point is that the statewide support system is well designed, effectively communicated to intended users, and backed up with sufficient resources so that it can be implemented as intended. Let's take those one by one
- What is your thinking on the design of the system: the components parts and how they work together?
- How has CALI, as a statewide system of support, been communicated, by the state to your district, by your district leadership to district staff and to schools?
- What resources have you drawn on to implement CALI? What resources or capacity have you created? What do you still need?

#### (3) Outcomes and impact

- In the theory of action, we hypothesized that outputs of CALI will be participation in CALI services and training, short term outcomes will be buy in and increased readiness, mid term outcomes will be changed practice in using data, and long term outcomes will be improved student achievement and other similar measures.
- What do you think of this theory of action in general?
- Speaking of short term outcomes, what were the factors that made your district make good use of CALI?

## Appendix D: District and School Site Visit Protocols

- What advice would you give the state on how to develop this ability for implementation if its not there?

[Note: Edie and Keisha will have key short mid and long term outcomes from the survey for the district being visited. They will use this information in probing to explain mid term outcomes]

- What factors have facilitated your implementation of CALI?
- What factors have hindered implementation of CALI?
- What would be needed to continue to move to a higher level of implementation?
- What is your sense of the culture and climate issues, concerns, changes?
- What student learning, teaching quality, organizational systemic results are you seeing thus far?
- What impact are you anticipating seeing over the next year or so?

### (4) Reflection

- What are your early hunches about CALI – where it will push envelopes, where it will fail, what will continue to stay in place and move forward, what do they think they need?
- In what ways could the CALI design be improved?

### 12:30-1:30 Lunch

**1:30-3:00** Group Interview with principals (contact person will be asked to recruit 2-4 principals of schools NOT represented on the District Data Team, seeking if possible representation of elementary, middle and high schools similar to the patterns in identified schools.

Purpose: To understand how school leaders who are not part of the District Data Team perceive CALI.

Preamble: Thank you for taking a few minutes to talk with us this afternoon. We have spent the morning learning about how the district sees CALI and how you have implemented it. The CSDE's chief goal, of course, is to support schools. We would like to talk with you to get your thoughts on how district support can be most effectively accessed or taken to the school level. We will audio record the conversation for the sake of completeness of notes. No one other than RMC staff will hear the recording or see the transcript and what you say will not be personally associated with you.

### Protocol:

#### (1) The big picture, or the story

- What does this Accountability for Learning Initiative (CALI) mean in your school?
- Compare your school's improvement work before and after this initiative (CALI.) Explain why or why not there are differences

## Appendix D: District and School Site Visit Protocols

### (2) Inputs, resources, components

- What are the new supports this has brought you?
- To what extent are these “just the right support, just in time”?
- Are you receiving other support as an identified school? If so, how does CALI fit with that support?
- What would be your advice to the district about CALI?

### (3) Outcomes and impact

- Is your school accessing [ready for] the training and support CALI is offering/bringing in?
- What are teachers (administrators, paraprofessionals) learning?
- How are you and your staff being supported to implement what they are learning through modules, Data Team work, and other CALI work?
- What student learning, teaching quality, organizational systemic results are you seeing thus far?
- What impact are you anticipating seeing from your participation in CALI over the next year or so?

### (4) Reflection

- What are your early hunches about CALI – where it will push envelopes, where it will fail/fall down, what will continue to stay in place and move forward, what do you think you need?
- In what ways could the CALI design be improved to serve you better?

**3:00-3:30 Break**

**3:30-4:30 Exit interview with Advisory Committee Member (contact person)**

Purpose: To test out main understandings, ask any clarification questions; make arrangements for collecting any documents that were referenced during the day and that are of interest.

(1) Recap the main things we have learned for reaction of the contact person

(2) Is there anything else you would like us to know or understand?

(3) If questions come up during analysis or if we want to test out hunches, would you be willing to speak with us once more on the phone?

### After the Site Visit

- RMC staff write reflective field memos, clean up handwritten notes, submit audio files to transcriber; clean up transcription

## **Appendix D: District and School Site Visit Protocols**

- Work through the CSDE lead consultant to get TAST data on each district
- If needed, telephone interview with Advisory Board member if there are any questions for clarification
- Analysis and write up

## Appendix D: District and School Site Visit Protocols

### CALI Evaluation School Site Visit Protocol November, 2009

#### Prior to the Site Visits:

- Heather will notify the district Advisory Team Member of the school selection; the AC member will notify the school Principal.
- Edie will follow up to schedule, establishing who the main point of contact is at the school level (likely the Principal, and the Principal may delegate to the School Data Team Chair for logistics), providing and adapting the agenda for the visit. Schools can flexibly arrange the components as suits their schedule, so long as all the pieces are addressed, securing meeting space for the site visitors, and providing directions to and parking information for the district office.
- RMC will collect the following information on each district
  - Telephone interview with the Administrative Coach and the Data Team Facilitator (for Demonstration School)
  - Telephone interview with the RESC service provider (if the school is in a district not yet visited)
  - Telephone interview or contact with Union Representative
  - Document review: School Improvement Plan, School Action Plan, if different; if a site not yet visited - Cambridge Education reviews, Strategic School Profile, District Improvement Plan; any documents telephone contacts suggest

#### At the Site Visit

##### Schedule and Protocol

#### Components:

- |   |                           |
|---|---------------------------|
| • Initial meeting with Contact Person for logistics     | 30 minutes                |
| • Meeting with Principal                                | 45 - 60 minutes           |
| • Tour of School  | 30 minutes                |
| • Meeting with School Data Team                         | 90 minutes                |
| • Meetings with one or two Instructional Data Teams     | 60 minutes                |
| • Meeting Instructional Team Leaders not yet included   | 45 – 60 minutes           |
| • Meeting with Union Representative and company         | 45 minutes                |
| • Exit meeting with Principal and/or Contact            | 30 minutes                |
| • Am Break and Lunch Breaks for team to gather thoughts | 60 minutes (15 and 45)    |
| • Totals  | 7.25 – 7.75 hours on site |

Schools may build schedule that works for them, coordinating school daily schedule, teacher prep times and such

**30 minutes** Initial Meeting with Contact Person

## Appendix D: District and School Site Visit Protocols

Purpose: To go over agenda and logistics for the day; preview space; set up equipment; answer any questions the school people may have.

**45 minutes** Meeting with Principal

Purpose: To get the overview of this school's CALI journey, story, successes, challenges, from the perspective of the Principal. General introduction and overview of CALI at the school, district support, state support, resources - both provided and needed, community participation, celebrations, etc.

General Preamble for all interviews – Adapt the last paragraph for particular group, and for particular point of time in the day, building upon what we are learning: Thank you for taking time to talk with us this morning. We are from RMC Research Corporation, and this site visit is part of the CALI evaluation sponsored by the state. The purpose of the evaluation is to provide data to the CSDE so that they can (1) understand what makes CALI work—or what stands in its way of being an effective means of supporting identified districts and schools and (2) improve the CALI system over time.

This is an evaluation of the statewide system of support; it is not an evaluation of your school, per se.

Last spring we visited four districts to get the “big picture” of how CALI was being implemented statewide and at the district level. Now we are in the process of visiting four schools in order to see how CALI is being implemented – and making a difference – at the school and classroom levels.

We will be audio recording our conversation today for the sake of the completeness of notes. No one other than RMC staff will hear recordings or see transcripts and data will not be identified with you personally.

In the next [time block] we would like to get a general understanding of the CALI “story” here at [your school.] This big picture understanding will help us as we dig deeper in interviews and observations throughout the day with the various instructional teams, individual school leaders, and “grand tour” to understand your perspective of CALI support.

Protocol:

(1) The big picture, or the story

- What does this Accountability for Learning Initiative (CALI) mean in your school?
- Compare your school's improvement work before and after this initiative (CALI.)  
Explain why or why not there are differences

(2) Inputs, resources, components

- What are the new supports this has brought you?

## Appendix D: District and School Site Visit Protocols

- To what extent are these “just the right support, just in time”?
- What supports and resources do you anticipate needing as time goes on, to really bring this into every classroom, to achieve student learning results, professional learning?
- Are you receiving other support as an identified school? If so, how does CALI fit with that support?
- What would be your advice to the district and to the state about CALI?

### (3) Outcomes and impact

- Is your school accessing the training and support CALI is offering?
- What are teachers (administrators, paraprofessionals) learning?
- How are you and your staff being supported to implement what you are learning through modules, Data Team work, and other CALI work?
- What student learning, teaching quality, organizational systemic results are you seeing thus far?
- How involved is your greater community?
- How are you celebrating your successes? (and learning from failures?)
- What impact are you anticipating seeing from your participation in CALI over the next year or so?

### (4) Reflection

- What are your early hunches about CALI – where it will push envelopes, where is it likely to fail/fall down, what will continue to stay in place and move forward, what do you think you need?
- In what ways could the CALI design be improved to serve you better?
- What else?

**30 minutes** General tour of the building usually blends nicely following this Principal interview, but can happen anytime throughout the day, the earlier the better.

Purpose: To get an overall picture of the school, an orientation to the school community, culture, size, scope, and general lay of the land.

**15 minutes** AM Break

**90 minutes** Group Interview with School Data Team

Purpose: To understand the perspective of the CALI school leadership team; to understand what the School Data Team believes it has accomplished, what has enabled its successes, what challenges and barriers it has encountered.

Protocol Adapted from above

### (1) The big picture, or the story

## Appendix D: District and School Site Visit Protocols

- Because we are interested in how CALI is impacting your work to support student learning, we'd like to ask what was happening prior to any of your CALI participation. What was life like here at your school?
- In general terms, what has happened as you have joined CALI? What are the structures that CALI has put in place?
- How far does CALI reach—within your school, classrooms, broader community?
- What is the role of your School Data Team? What might happen during a typical Data Team meeting? What has been the nature of the work? Accomplishments? Challenges?
- What has worked well? What has supported you to work well? What has worked less well? What has blocked your progress, or what might support you further?

### (2) Inputs, resources, components

- In our CALI theory of action, a starting point is that the statewide support system is well designed, effectively communicated to intended users, and backed up with sufficient resources so that it can be implemented as intended. Let's take those one by one
- What is your thinking on the design of the system: the components, parts, and how they work together?
- How has CALI, as a statewide system of support, been communicated, by your district leadership and by the state to your school?
- What resources have you drawn on to implement CALI? What resources or capacity have you created? What do you still need?
- What has the district or state done to make your participation in CALI easy or difficult?
- What support has the [RESC Alliance and SERC – name the specific RESC] provided in implementing CALI? How helpful, useful has that assistance been?
- To what extent have you successfully built capacity of your own school staff to implement CALI?
- What is your view of the various CALI components as a system? How do these CALI components, as a system, fit with one another? Work for your school?
- How do CALI supports for identified schools fit your needs, or the goals your school is working on?

### (3) Outcomes and impact

- In the theory of action, we hypothesized that outputs of CALI will be participation in CALI services and training, short term outcomes will be buy in and increased readiness, mid term outcomes will be changed practice in using data, and long term outcomes will be improved student achievement and other similar measures.
- What do you think of this theory of action in general?
- Speaking of short term outcomes, what were the factors that made your school able to make good use of CALI, or not?
- What advice would you give the district and state on how to develop this ability for implementation if its not there?

## Appendix D: District and School Site Visit Protocols

[Note: Edie and Carolyn will have key short mid and long term outcomes from the survey for the school being visited. They will use this information in probing to explain mid term outcomes]

- What factors have facilitated your implementation of CALI?
- What factors have hindered implementation of CALI?
- What would be needed to continue to move to a higher level of implementation?
- What is your sense of the culture and climate issues, concerns, changes?
- What student learning, teaching quality, school wide systemic results are you seeing thus far?
- What impact are you anticipating seeing over the next year or so?
- What are your CALI implementation successes?
- What have been the challenges in implementing CALI?
- What student learning, teaching quality, organizational systemic results are you seeing thus far?

### (4) Reflection

- What are your early hunches about CALI – where it will *push the envelope*, where it will fall down or fail? What will continue to stay in place and move forward? What do you think you need in order for this to really work here?
- In what ways can CALI really reach to the classroom level?

**60 minutes** Meetings with one or two Instructional Data Teams

Purpose: To understand how the various Instructional Data Teams work. The protocol will follow the same line of questioning as that of the School Data Team, but with a clearer focus on the particular grade level (elementary) or content area (secondary school.) This is where the *rubber meets the road* in terms of implementing the Doug Reeves work.

First, the RMC Team will summarize our understandings of CALI in this school, to save going over territory already covered. Depending on the pictures that are forming, these questions will follow:

- What is your understanding of data driven decision making and how does it translate into practice for your team?
- What is a typical *day in the life* for your team, or what might a typical agenda for your team meeting look like?
- What data are driving your work? Are you looking at student work?
- How is this changing your practice?
- What additional resources and supports do you need to make this really work well/continue to work well?
- Do you have rubrics or standards of practice for the new work you are doing? In other words, do you have a collective picture of what this work would look like if done well?
- What else would you like us to know?

## Appendix D: District and School Site Visit Protocols

### 45 minutes Lunch

### 45 – 60 minutes Meeting Instructional Team Leaders not yet included

Same as above – the purpose is to gather as full a picture as possible, meeting with one or two teams, and as many more facilitators/leaders.

### 45 minutes Meeting with Union Representative and company

Purpose: To understand the teacher view from the perspective of teacher advocate, association, union membership.

#### (1) The big picture, or the story

- Because we are interested in how CALI is impacting your work to support student learning, we'd like to ask what was happening prior to any of your CALI participation. What was life like here at your school?
- In general terms, what has happened as you have joined CALI? What are the structures that CALI has put in place?
- How far does CALI reach—within your school, classrooms, broader community?
- What is your role in or your position on CALI in your school? What has been the nature of your work? Accomplishments? Challenges?
- What has worked well? What has worked less well? Why do you think that is the case?

#### (2) Inputs, resources, components

- In our CALI theory of action, a starting point is that the statewide support system is well designed, effectively communicated to intended users, and backed up with sufficient resources so that it can be implemented as intended. Let's take those one by one
- What is your thinking on the design of the system: the components, parts, and how they work together?
- How has CALI, as a statewide system of support, been communicated, by your district leadership and by the state to your school?
- What has the district or state done to make your participation in CALI easy or difficult?
- What support has the [RESC Alliance and SERC – name the specific RESC] provided in implementing CALI? How helpful, useful has that assistance been?
- To what extent have you successfully built capacity of your own school staff to implement CALI?
- What is your view of the various CALI components as a system? How do these CALI components, as a system, fit with one another? Work for your school?

#### (3) Outcomes and impact

- In the theory of action, we hypothesized that outputs of CALI will be participation in CALI services and training, short term outcomes will be buy in and increased readiness,

## Appendix D: District and School Site Visit Protocols

mid term outcomes will be changed practice in using data, and long term outcomes will be improved student achievement and other similar measures.

- What do you think of this theory of action in general?
- Speaking of short term outcomes, what were the factors that made your school able to make good use of CALI, or not?
- What advice would you give the district and state on how to develop this ability for implementation if its not there?
- What would be needed to continue to move to a higher level of implementation?
- What is your sense of the culture and climate issues, concerns, changes?
- What student learning, teaching quality, school wide systemic results are you seeing thus far?
- What impact are you anticipating seeing over the next year or so?

### (4) Reflection

- What are your early hunches about CALI – where it will *push the envelope*, where it will fall down or fail? What will continue to stay in place and move forward? What do you think you need in order for this to really work here?

**30 minutes** Exit interview with Principal (and possibly contact person, if different)

Purpose: To test out main understandings, ask any clarification questions; make arrangements for collecting any documents that were referenced during the day and that are of interest.

(1) Recap the main things we have learned today

(2) Is there anything else you would like us to know or understand?

(3) If questions come up during analysis or if we want to test out hunches, would you be willing to speak with us once more on the phone?

### After the Site Visit

- RMC staff/Edie write reflective field memos, clean up handwritten notes, submit audio files to Janet, who will send to transcriber; Edie will clean up transcriptions
- Work through the CSDE lead consultant to get any TAST data available on each school
- If needed, telephone interview with Principal, School Contact, District Advisory Board member if there are any questions for clarification
- Analysis and write up for the purpose of adding to and enhancing current Interim Report
  - May or may not use Ethnograph, depending on scope and “new info” in field work
  - May explore working with interns from neighboring universities if their practicum work and our analysis work are a worthy and cost effective fit

## Appendix D: District and School Site Visit Protocols

### CALI Evaluation School Site Visit Protocol

*This shorter version is what was sent to School Principals in advance for planning  
November, 2009*

The overall purpose of the school site visit is to see how CALI is implemented at the school level, to gain an understanding of what is needed to bring the work to full implementation to impact student learning, and to gain insight as to how state and district staff members can continue to support school participation. This is an evaluation of the statewide system of support; it is not an evaluation of the individual schools.

The overall CALI evaluation questions are:

- To what extent and degree of fidelity is CALI being implemented at the district and school level in districts identified as in need of improvement, corrective action, or restructuring under NCLB?
- Do the components/interventions support one another other? If so, how and to what degree?
- What impact is CALI having on district, school, teacher, and student performance?

#### Schedule and Protocol

##### **Components:**

- |   |                           |
|---|---------------------------|
| • Initial meeting with Contact Person for logistics     | 30 minutes                |
| • Meeting with Principal                                | 45 - 60 minutes           |
| • Tour of School  | 30 minutes                |
| • Meeting with School Data Team                         | 90 minutes                |
| • Meetings with one or two Instructional Data Teams     | 60 minutes                |
| • Meeting Instructional Team Leaders not yet included   | 45 – 60 minutes           |
| • Meeting with Union Representative and company         | 45 minutes                |
| • Exit meeting with Principal and/or Contact            | 30 minutes                |
| • Am Break and Lunch Breaks for team to gather thoughts | 60 minutes (15 and 45)    |
| • Totals  | 7.25 – 7.75 hours on site |

Schools may build a schedule that works for them, coordinating school daily schedule, teacher prep times and such. The following may occur in any order, after the initial meeting with Contact Person.

**30 minutes** Initial Meeting with Contact Person

Purpose: To go over agenda and logistics for the day; preview space; set up equipment; answer any questions the school people may have.

**45 minutes** Meeting with Principal

## **Appendix D: District and School Site Visit Protocols**

Purpose: To get the overview of this school's CALI journey, story, successes, challenges, from the perspective of the Principal. General introduction and overview of CALI at the school, district support, state support, resources - both provided and needed, community participation, celebrations, etc.

**30 minutes** General tour of the building usually blends nicely following this Principal interview, but can happen anytime throughout the day, the earlier the better.

Purpose: To get an overall picture of the school, an orientation to the school community, culture, size, scope, and general *lay of the land*.

**15 minutes** **AM Break**

**90 minutes** Group Interview with School Data Team

Purpose: To understand the perspective of the CALI school leadership team; to understand what the School Data Team believes it has accomplished, what has enabled its successes, what challenges and barriers it has encountered.

**60 minutes** Meetings with one or two Instructional Data Teams

Purpose: To understand how the various Instructional Data Teams work. The protocol will follow the same line of questioning as that of the School Data Team, but with a clearer focus on the particular grade level (elementary) or content area (secondary school.) This is where the *rubber meets the road* in terms of implementing the Doug Reeves' data driven decision making work.

**45 minutes** **Lunch and team reflections**

**45 – 60 minutes** Meeting Instructional Team Leaders not yet included in Instructional Data Team meeting(s)

Purpose: Same as for IDT's above – the purpose is to gather as full a picture as possible, meeting with one or two teams, and as many more facilitators/leaders.

**45 minutes** Meeting with Union Representative and company

Purpose: To understand the teacher view from the perspective of teacher advocate, association, union membership.

**30 minutes** Exit interview with Principal (and possibly contact person, if different)

Purpose: To test out main understandings, ask any clarification questions; make arrangements for collecting any documents that were referenced during the day and that are of interest.

Thank you for opening your school to the CALI Evaluation Team!

## **Acknowledgements**

RMC offers its thanks to all 15 CALI Partner Districts and Schools for providing us with data to produce this portrait of the current status and direction of Connecticut's Accountability for Learning Initiative. Thank you for taking the time to complete the district and school surveys and to provide comments and rich information for us to analyze and report.

In particular, we wish to express our deep appreciation to the four CALI districts we visited in spring 2009, and to the four CALI schools we visited during the winter of 2010, to all of the many participants, and particularly the Advisory Committee members and Principals who opened their doors and provided hospitality, implementation stories, reflections, and ideas for us. We recognize that life in districts and schools is always busy and we appreciate your taking the time to contribute to the conversation on improving CALI so that it can reach its potential in creating education systems that serve students well.

### **The RMC Research Evaluation Team**

This evaluation was conducted by RMC Research Corporation in Arlington, Virginia. Team members included:

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