Cultivating Leadership & Implementation of Evidence-Based Practices

Caryn Ward, PhD
Oscar Fleming, PhD
Sophia Farmer, MT

October 2021

Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will be able to . . .

- Articulate the 'why' for leadership

- Discriminate between different leadership roles within implementation

- Understand critical strategies for creating an environment supportive to implementation

- Determine whether an implementation challenge is an adaptive or technical challenge

- Understand adaptive leadership strategies for an implementation challenge

Leadership

"I define a leader as anyone who takes responsibility for finding the potential in people and processes, and who has the courage to develop that potential."

Leadership

Leadership within implementation of evidence-based practices is important because _____.

Leadership Roles in Implementation

Executive Sponsors

- Formal authority & decision-making power
- Internal to organization
- Can also be a champion
- Not embedded in the day-to-day work of implementation

Champions

- Formal or informal authority & decision-making power
- Internal to the organization
- Have an intrinsic interest in the needed change
- Driven to succeed
- Positive approach to the work, and
- Strong conviction or belief in their ability to do the work

(Miech, et al. 2018)

Discussion

Do you have an executive sponsor, champion or both roles in your leadership structure?
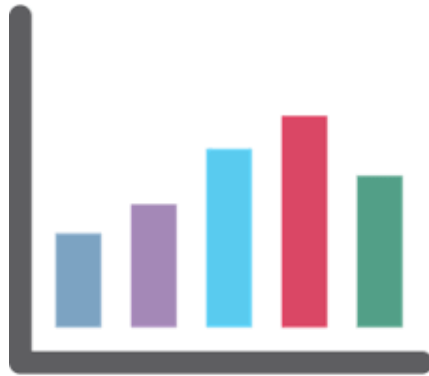
Leadership

Champions and Executive Sponsors should collaborate, communicate, and support one another,

and just as important,

Executive Sponsors should cultivate the leadership attributes within Champions.

Be the kind of leader that you would follow!

Executive Sponsor's Activities

- Identifying existing leadership roles of relevance to implementation efforts

- Assisting with collaborative consensus and providing a level of authority to the process

- Working and communicating with relevant formal leaders involved in implementation to define, understand, and develop their role as implementation leaders

- Developing processes and structures for regular debriefs with implementation leaders

- Supporting problem -solving opportunities identified by leaders and others

- Supporting leaders to access data and information required for monitoring and making decisions

Champion Activities

- Advocating for the implementation process and practices

- Building relationships with internal staff and external stakeholders

- Persuading others of the EBP merits, need, and selection process

- Planning and facilitating implementation team meetings

- Creating a reflective and safe learning/collaborative environment

- Supporting implementation of the EBP at the ground level

- Examining data to troubleshoot or remove barriers to implementation

- Facilitating discussion around team membership to ensure a diverse and equitable group

Discussion

Do you have an executive sponsor, champion or both roles in your leadership structure?

Cultivating High Quality Champions

Five Attributes
(Bonawitz, et al. 2020)

Influence	Ownership
Presence	Persistence
Participatory Leadership	

Discussion

Which attribute as a champion do you want to focus on strengthening this year?

- Influence
- Ownership
- Physical Presence
- Persistence
- Participatory Leadership

Leadership

- There are additional levels of leadership in implementation efforts.
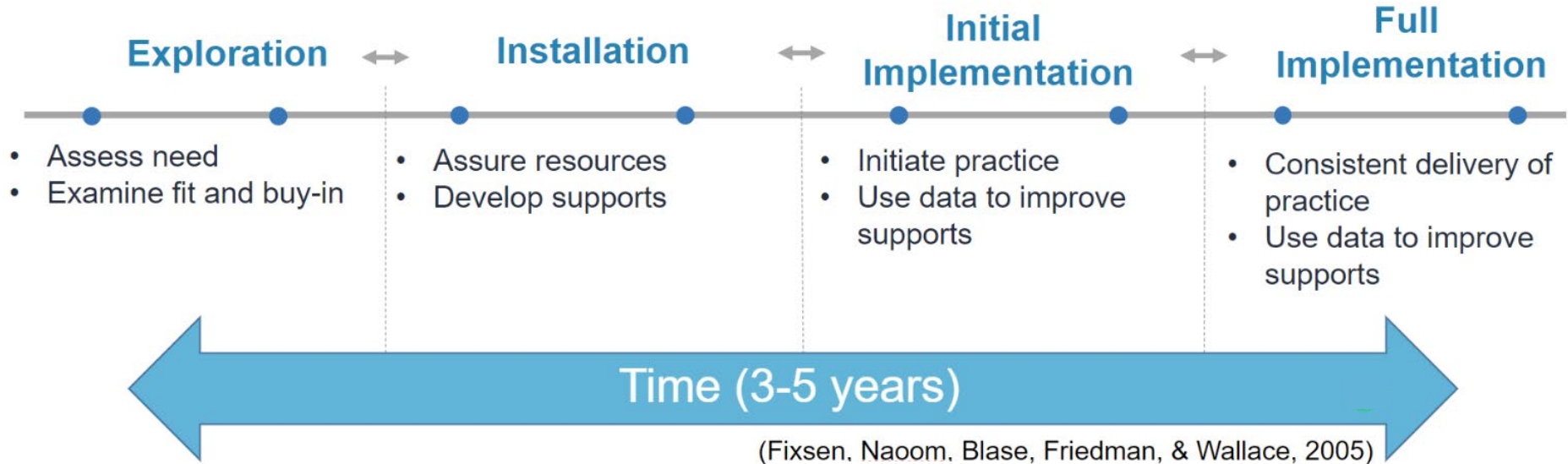- Congruence at all levels of the system is critical for success

Leadership

Let's examine how leaders create a culture or climate of implementation.

Journey: Implementation Stages

Exploration ↔ **Installation** ↔ **Initial Implementation** ↔ **Full Implementation**

- Assess need
- Examine fit and buy-in

- Assure resources
- Develop supports

- Initiate practice
- Use data to improve supports

- Consistent delivery of practice
- Use data to improve supports

Time (3-5 years)

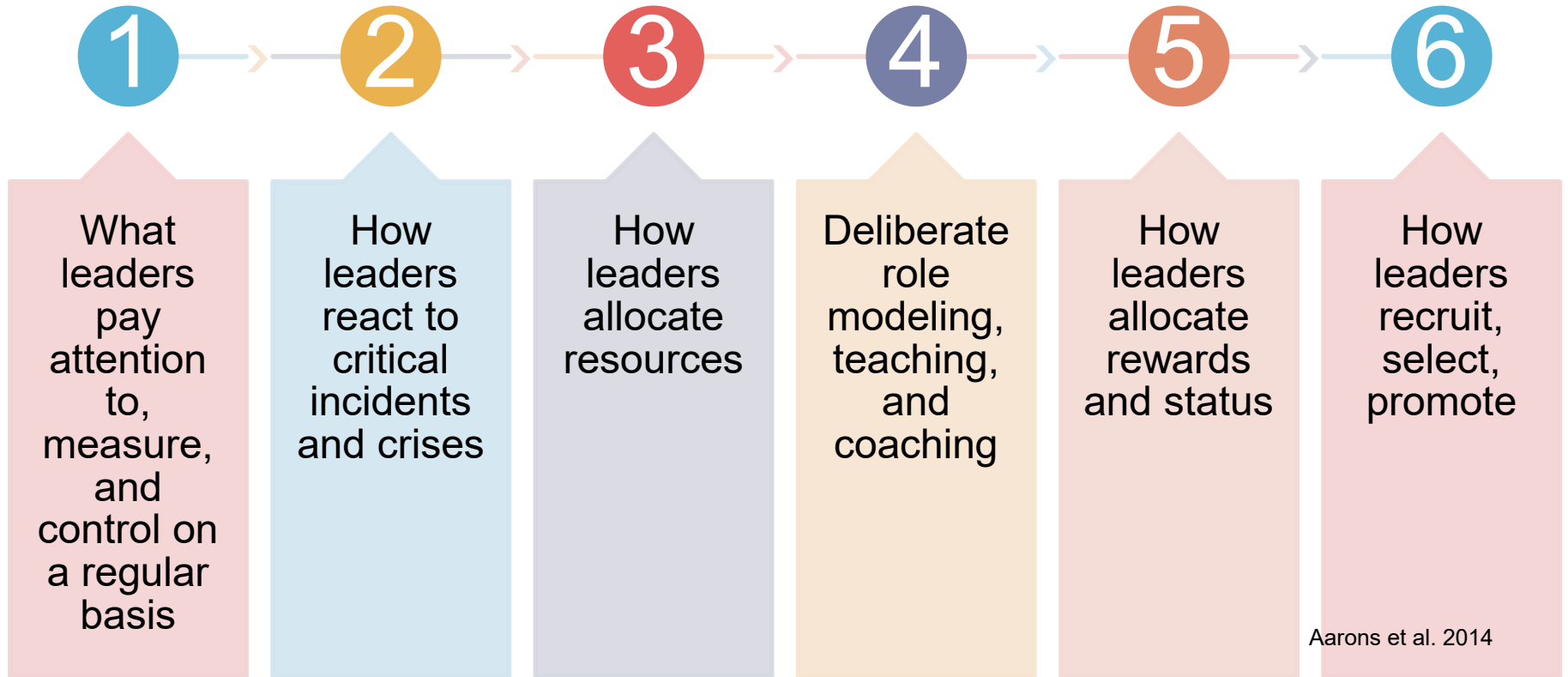(Fixsen, Naoom, Blase, Friedman, & Wallace, 2005)

Implementation Leadership

Leaders use various strategies for creating a climate or environment for implementation
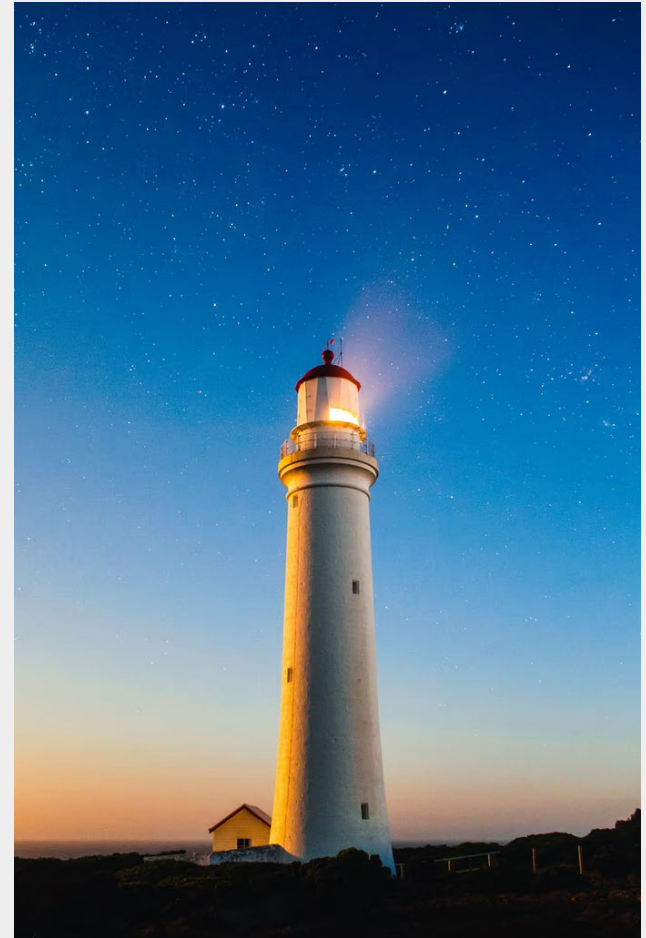
Leaders communicate a climate for implementation by…

1. What leaders pay attention to, measure, and control on a regular basis
2. How leaders react to critical incidents and crises
3. How leaders allocate resources
4. Deliberate role modeling, teaching, and coaching
5. How leaders allocate rewards and status
6. How leaders recruit, select, promote

Aarons et al. 2014

Examples:

What leaders pay attention to, measure, and control on a regular basis:

Deliberate role modeling, teaching, and coaching

- Sustaining focus on implementation *and* program outcome measures

- Responsive coaching of implementation team leads to support confidence and growth in this leadership role

Aarons et al. 2014

Discussion

Have you ever been in a situation where a leader has a stated vision or priority, but one of the 6 strategies listed was incongruent with that vision?

Leadership cultivate, support and sustain a supportive context for implementation by…

Organizational design and structure

Organizational systems and procedures

Rites and rituals of the organization

Design of physical space, facades, and buildings

Stories about important events and people

Formal statements of organizational philosophy, creeds, and charters

Aarons et al. 2014

Examples – Systems Mechanisms

Rites and rituals of the organization: Developing performance awards that celebrate and reward implementation successes, such as sustained high-fidelity practice

Stories about important events and people: Leverage organizational communications to document and highlight implementation leadership that aligns with organizational priorities

Aarons et al. 2014

Discussion

As you have engaged this past year in some of the 'strategies' listed previously, name a challenge you have faced.

Opportunities & Challenges in Implementation

Technical

- Complicated
- Agreement that a problem exists
- Agreement on what problem is
- Solutions readily available

Adaptive

- Complicated
- Lack of agreement that a problem exists
- Lack of agreement on what problem is
- Solutions are lacking

Assessing Your Challenge and Context

- Are there legitimate, yet competing, perspectives?

- Is there lack of agreement about how "the problem" is formulated and therefore lack of agreement about the "solutions"?

- Are there deeply rooted and different perspectives on the "issue" at hand (political, moral, philosophical, pedagogical)?

- Will solutions and implementation require learning?

- Will attempting solutions generate feelings of loss, grief, disloyalty and/or incompetence?

- Will the primary locus of responsibility fall on multiple entities or individuals?

Yes = Adaptative Challenges

Discussion

Was the implementation challenge you named earlier, an adaptive or technical challenge?
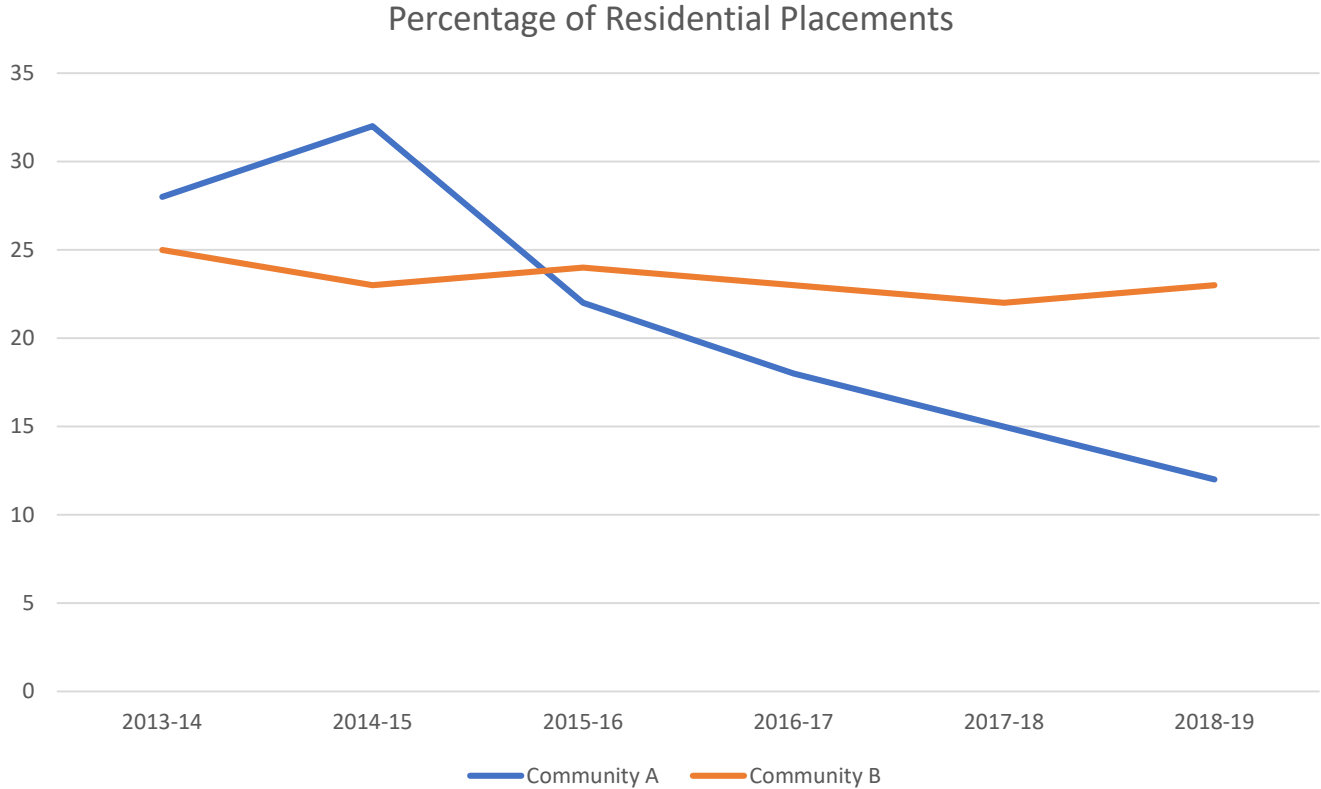
Work of Leaders & Teams

(Heifetz & Laurie 1998)

- Get on the Balcony

- Identify the Adaptive Challenge

- Regulate Distress

- Maintain Disciplined Attention

- Give the Work Back to the People

- Protect All Voices

A tale of 2 local communities

Percentage of Residential Placements

Getting on the Balcony & Identifying Adaptive Challenge

Community A

- Too many practices
- Professional learning not addressing competencies needed or using enough adult learning practices
- Coaching is needed
- Practitioner and family voice needed

Community B

- We have great staff and programming of interventions!
- Coaching is for new staff only.
- Professional development is done once a year.
- We support attendance at conferences and sharing of learnings.

Discussion

In this example, what are some of the adaptive challenges?

Regulating Distress & Maintaining Disciplined Attention

Community A

- Started small and got better. Identified a small number of practitioners to focus

- Implementation team aligned and leveraged new priority to support current emphasis.

Community B

- All staff must be using new practices and programming at start of year

- All staff meetings and supports focused on new priorities

Community A: Change on Purpose

Implementation Supports & Practices v.1.0

Implementation Supports & Practices v.5.0

Evidence and Data

Learning and Improvement

System stabilized and used with high variability

System stabilized and used with consistency

Cohort 1

Cohort 2

Cohort 3

Cohort 4
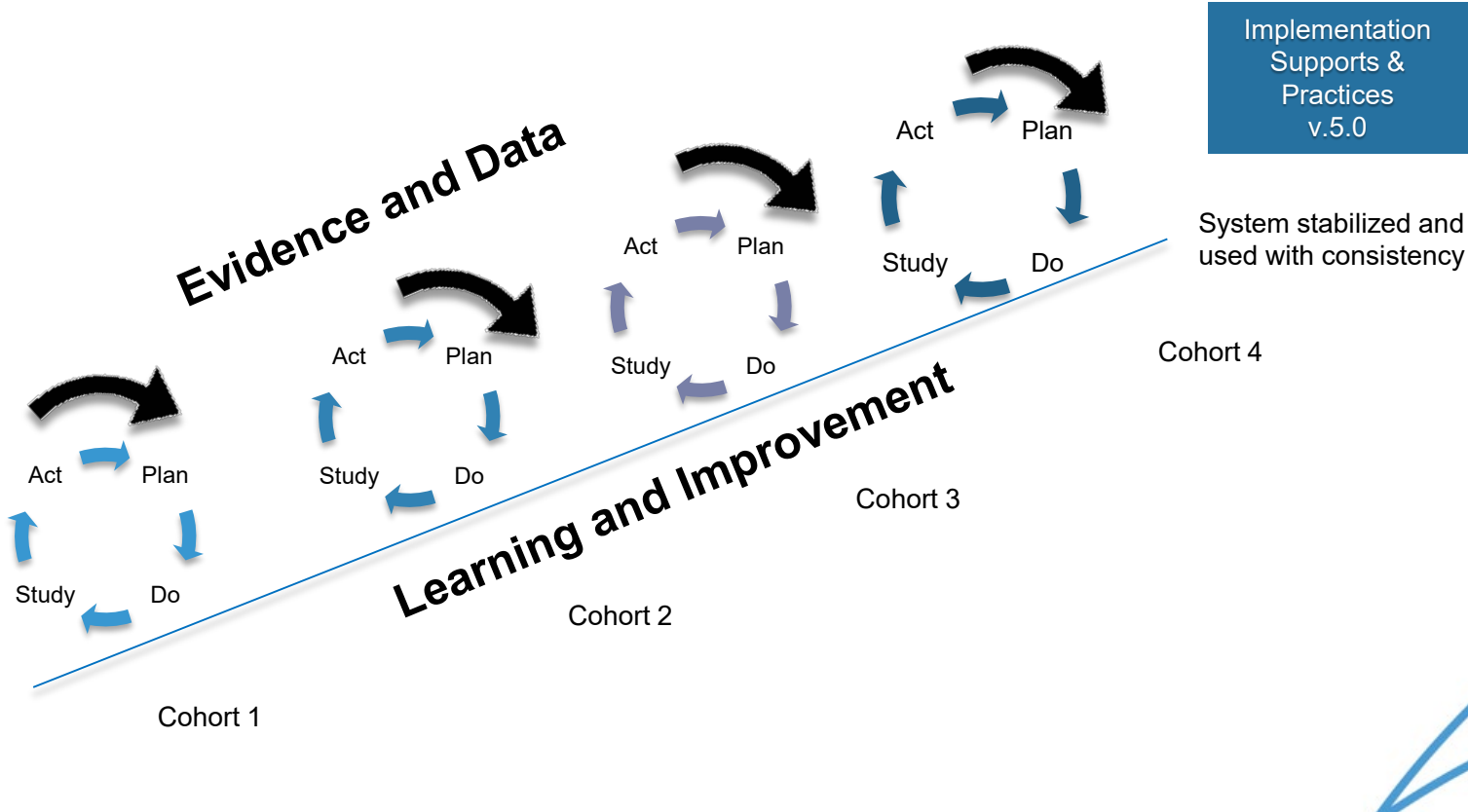
Giving Work Back to People & Protecting Voices

Community A

Implementation teams meet monthly to review and use data for improvement

Staff surveys and listening sessions

Empathy interviewing with families receiving services

Community B

Supervisor meets twice a year with leadership team to review data and review strategic plan

Consultant wrote strategic plan

A tale of 2 local communities

Percentage of Residential Placements
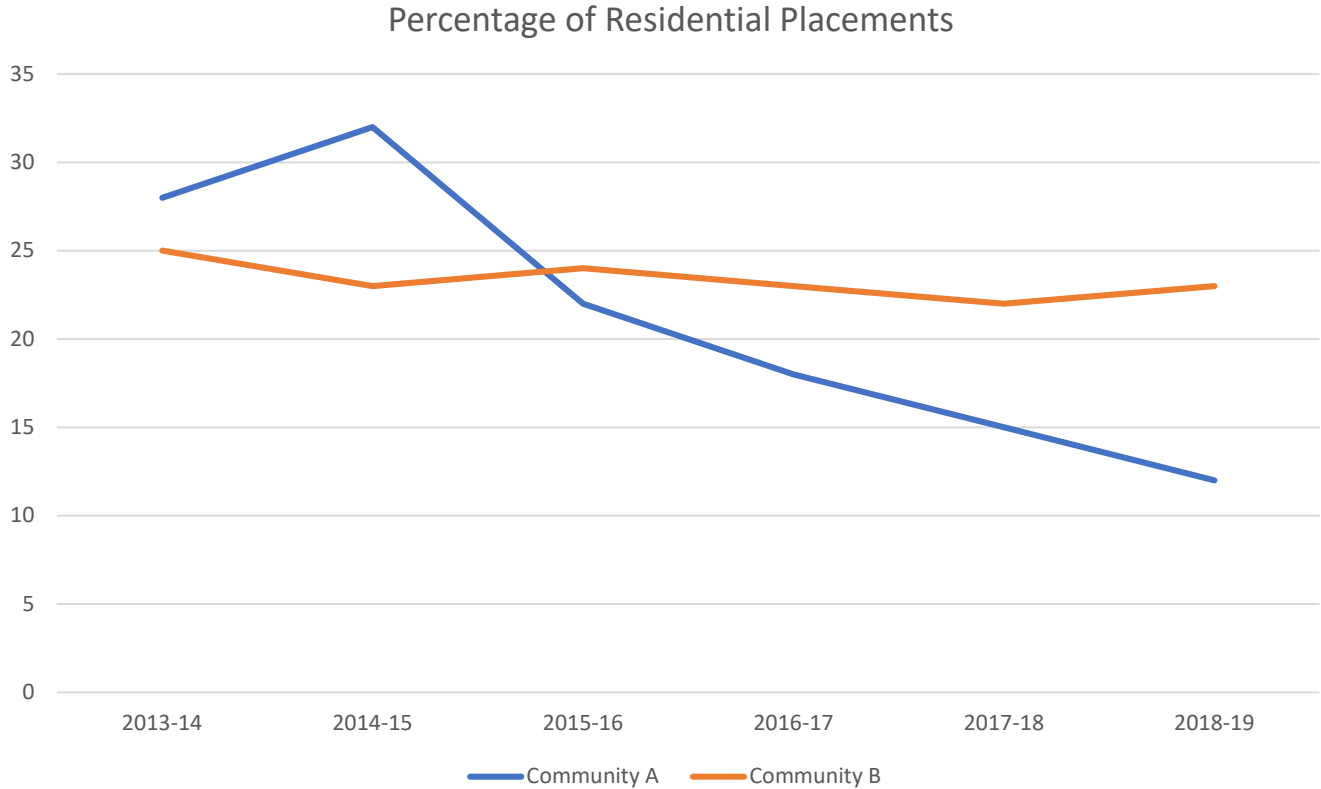
Discussion

For the implementation challenge you named earlier, what is an adaptive leadership strategy you want to apply?

Adaptive Challenges & Solutions

- Attempted solution leads to more wicked problems

- No stopping rules – iterative processes, changing contexts

- Solutions are not true -or- false, but better or worse

- You don't understand the problem fully without trying solutions

Believe in Possibilities   …

Active Implementation Tools & Resources

[AI Hub](#)

Online Learning Includes:

Modules
Check out internet based training on active implementation, including content, activities and assessments, designed to be self-paced or blended with in pre-service or in-service training.

Lessons & Short Courses
AI Hub Lessons and Short Courses will get you and your team started using implementation tools and practices, so that you can build implementation skills and capacity. These resources can be used for self-paced learning or professional development in a team setting.

Resource Library
Find just-in-time active implementation resources and tools (e.g., planning tools, handouts and video clips)

Visit NIRN

@impscience

@impscience

https://nirn.fpg.unc.edu/

 The mission of the National Implementation Research Network (NIRN) is to contribute to the best practices and science of implementation, organization change, and system reinvention to improve outcomes across the spectrum of human services.

email: nirn@unc.edu

Advancing knowledge to transform children's lives