

Introduction

In the United States, segregation remains one of the most pernicious examples of how the country's long legacy of institutional racism continues to limit opportunities for many residents. Segregation has an outsized impact on the opportunities people can access, influencing both the neighborhoods they live in and the schools they attend. Although residential segregation has decreased moderately in major metropolitan areas over the past 2 decades, it remains acute (Frey, 2018b). Approximately half of all Black people in the United States live in neighborhoods with virtually no White people, and White people live in neighborhoods that are, on average, 80% White (Quick & Kahlenberg, 2019). Similarly, rates of school segregation have been increasing since the 1980s, and as of 2017, only one in eight White students has attended a school in which students of color make up the majority compared with seven in 10 Black students attending a school in which students of color make up the majority (Garcia, 2020).

Both residential and school segregation limit access to educational opportunities.¹ Because most school funding is based on local property taxes, students who live in lower opportunity communities often attend schools that have lower levels of funding and fewer supports and resources for students. Most under-resourced schools also have significantly fewer highly qualified and experienced teachers, higher rates of teacher turnover, and lower numbers of students with established patterns of strong academic outcomes (American Educational Research Association, 2006). These schools restrict students' long-term access to economic opportunities, resulting in limited intergenerational mobility, meaning children become more likely than not to follow the economic trajectory of their parents or guardians. School desegregation can be an essential lever for improving student outcomes for all students who attend desegregated schools (Wells et al., 2016). Research shows that Black

Definitions

For the purposes of our study, we define *desegregation* and *integration* as interrelated but distinct terms.

Desegregation: The removal of barriers to allow students of different races to attend the same school. Indicators of school desegregation focus on the demographic makeup of the school and its corresponding neighborhoods.

Integration: The creation of educational communities where students and adults of different races not only teach and learn together but also collaborate to advance the educational experience of the entire student body. Indicators of integration include diverse school staff, inclusive curricula, and the incorporation of student voices.

¹ Bridges Collaborative Member Organizations define the focus populations for their desegregation or integration initiatives differently based on local contexts. Many members focus on different types of segregation (both racial and economic). Although the literature is largely focused on Black-White segregation, we attempt to represent member initiatives as they are framed by the members.

students who attend desegregated schools have better outcomes than their peers who attend segregated schools, including better scores in reading, math, and science as well as improved critical thinking skills (Johnson & Nazaryan, 2019; Reardon, 2016). Similarly, White students who attend desegregated schools not only show consistent academic achievement outcomes with peers in segregated schools but also show improved tolerance and cross-cultural understanding as well as decreased prejudice and bias (Johnson & Nazaryan, 2019; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2016; Tropp & Saxena, 2018).

Although research provides powerful evidence that desegregation is linked to improved outcomes for students, much of the progress on school desegregation took place in the 1960s–1980s, driven by the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and court intervention. Today, even though research indicates that over 700 desegregation orders remain in place (Potter & Burris, 2020), the implementation, enforcement, and even institutional knowledge of these court orders vary (Cohen, 2015; Potter & Burris, 2020; United States Commission on Civil Rights, 2007). Furthermore, even where court orders remain in place, the nature of segregation has changed. Although residential segregation has improved in cities, suburban segregation has worsened. Driven by single family–zoning ordinances, school district gerrymandering, and other state and local housing and school district policies, two thirds of school segregation now stems from between-district segregation rather than within-district segregation (EdBuild, 2020; Johnson & Nazaryan, 2019). Since the 1974 Supreme Court decision in *Milliken v. Bradley* (1974), desegregation orders cannot require between-district desegregation unless both districts are found to be segregated. Because of their relative homogeneity, most suburbs do not meet the benchmark for intervention.

Within the realities of this changing context, we must learn more about how desegregation should be implemented to yield the best outcomes. In particular, more research is needed on how public school districts and charter management organizations can build desegregated schools in the current legislative and political climates. As schools work toward desegregation, we also need more information to determine how they can be integrated, ensuring that all students have similar educational experiences regardless of race.

[The Bridges Collaborative](#), an initiative of [The Century Foundation](#), is a network of school district leaders, charter management organization and school leaders, and fair housing organization staff. In convening these groups, the Bridges Collaborative serves as a learning and innovation hub for practitioners from across the country, providing the space and opportunity to share learning, build grassroots political support, and develop successful strategies for integration and desegregation efforts across the United States.

Through this study, the American Institutes for Research® (AIR®) is partnering with The Century Foundation’s Bridges Collaborative to begin filling this gap in information by exploring promising practices in desegregation and integration in the current national and local contexts.

As part of our efforts to document the work of Bridges Collaborative Member Organizations, AIR has identified a set of foundational cross-cutting constructs, or elements that may support successful school desegregation and integration efforts at the organizational level. Using the research literature from integration- and desegregation-specific work as well as broader systems-change efforts, AIR has identified seven foundational constructs: Local Context, Readiness, Resource Expenditure, Communication and Engagement, Cross-System Collaboration, Continuous Improvement, and Sustainability. Although each member organization is grounded in a unique local context and history, AIR theorizes that these constructs could help drive effective integration and/or desegregation initiatives in other communities.

This document is designed to share potential foundational concepts to help districts and schools around the country effectively plan, implement, and sustain desegregation and integration initiatives. In the sections that follow, we provide information on our methodology for this report. We then summarize the set of constructs that research on transformative change suggests could lead to more effective integration and desegregation efforts. Finally, we highlight specific examples of emerging strategies from the field drawn from interviews with Member Organizations.

Desegregation and Integration Constructs

In this section, we provide an overview of **constructs** and **indicators** used in desegregation and integration initiatives. Each construct section provides an overview of complementary evidence bases that relate to the topic area. In addition, these construct summaries provide a snapshot of common elements and example strategies that Bridges Collaborative Member Organizations described as contributing to the planning, implementation, and sustainment processes of their desegregation or integration initiatives. AIR will continue to conduct research in partnership with the Bridges Collaborative to refine the constructs and indicators and create paired resources (e.g., a self-assessment rubric, member profiles). We provide a detailed overview of the methodology our team used to identify constructs and indicators below.

Constructs and Indicators

For this report, AIR defines a construct as a broad thematic concept that describes the factors necessary and relevant to integration and desegregation initiatives. Indicators are the targeted and measurable strategies that can be grouped under the high-level constructs. Indicators relate to observable organizational practices, human behaviors, or institutional structures.

AIR has identified seven constructs and 24 supporting indicators (see Exhibit 1) that research suggests could be linked to effective school desegregation and integration initiatives.

Local Context

Research suggests that local context—or the set of systems, actors, and conditions in which any initiative or intervention takes place—is a crucial element affecting how participants implement initiatives and achieve desired outcomes (Bryk et al., 2010; Fixsen et al., 2005; White, 1985). In this report, we treat Local Context as a set of underlying factors that are essential to understand and integrate into planned desegregation and integration initiatives. It is important to note that individual organizations often have less agency in changing these factors.

Indicators of Local Context identified from the literature and member conversations include Community Context, Policy Context, Leadership Buy-In, Programs and Practices, and Culture and Climate.

Community Context refers to information on the population in the surrounding areas or neighborhoods and trends in how these populations shift over time (Carlson & Bell, 2021; Fixsen et al., 2005; Kahlenberg, 2012). For school desegregation and integration initiatives, it is important for initiative leaders to understand the state of residential segregation in their communities and the underlying factors that cause it (e.g., redlining housing policies, housing voucher restrictions). Relatedly, members also described the importance of understanding shifting demographic trends in both neighborhoods and schools, citing gentrification, housing affordability, and declining enrollment in public schools as key contextual factors that can act as barriers to initiatives.

Policy Context refers to the legislation or policy measures in place or under consideration that could affect desegregation or integration initiatives (Diem et al., 2014; Harris & Jones, 2017; Wallace, 2021). As an indicator, Policy Context spans multiple systems in which local, state, and federal policies potentially impact school desegregation or integration initiatives. School board efforts are a significant element of local policy context, as are school- and district-level education policies, including attendance, enrollment, choice, and charter and magnet policies. Outside of education, local housing policies—such as zoning or land use—and transportation policies are also important to understand. State policy efforts often contribute to available funding for local school initiatives and can include state legislation and governors' initiatives. At the federal level, federal court orders mandating desegregation or integration efforts are critical for some districts.² Initiative leaders must navigate the multilevel policy context and should work to ensure that their initiatives are aligned with policy strictures and effectively maximize available resources. In addition, initiative leaders can design complementary

² The Supreme Court decisions in *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District* (2007) and *Meredith v. Jefferson County Board of Education* (2007) are also significant factors for many districts and schools because they limit the local ability to focus on desegregation by race in most locales.

advocacy efforts to create a meaningful feedback loop between their initiatives and key decision makers who design and implement policy at various levels.

Leadership Buy-In refers to the level of support for desegregation or integration demonstrated by people in charge at the lead organization and key supporting organizations (e.g., individual school or district leaders, funders, school boards, major partners; Domlyn et al., 2021; Dymnicki et al., 2014). Organizational leaders with high levels of buy-in typically understand and articulate the value of desegregation, integration, and overall equity priorities (Dymnicki et al., 2014; Scaccia et al., 2014). Integration initiative leaders must understand which organizational leaders are supporters of the work and which may serve as barriers to advancing initiative goals. Initiative leaders can then identify supportive roles for organizational leaders (e.g., allocating funding, changing policy, engaging community members), including opportunities to build coalitions and invite multilevel leaders, staff, and key partners to advocate for the work (Schraeder et al., 2005). In addition, initiative leaders can be intentional about the assets (e.g., connections, expertise, and influence) that they can leverage to champion work in their spheres (Bryson et al., 2015).

Programs and Practices refers to the programs, practices, events, incentives, or campaigns already in place or under consideration that may support, serve as barriers to, or otherwise overlap with desegregation and integration initiatives (Ayscue & Siegel-Hawley, 2019; McPherson, 2011; Riel et al., 2018; Wallace, 2021). Initiative leaders should develop a clear map of existing programs and practices across divisions and across initiative partner organizations that may align or conflict with desegregation and integration goals and plans. Leaders should also document past efforts and how their success or failure might influence readiness for and the feasibility of current initiatives. As part of the mapping process, initiative leaders must also understand where programs are located within their systems and partnerships and who can access them. This can help leaders focus on which access barriers need to be removed while also leveraging program availability to incentivize desegregation and integration.

Culture and Climate describes the current and historical beliefs (e.g., political, communal, religious, environmental) and corresponding behaviors endemic to the local community that may affect desegregation and integration initiatives (Fixsen et al., 2005; Sims & Talbert, 2019; Wallace, 2021). Initiative leaders should explore community attitudes toward equity and equity-focused initiatives in general, and they should explore the specific needs and goals of different populations related to desegregation and integration initiatives. Similarly, leaders should strive to understand political forces operating in their community that might affect buy-in among partners and community members or impact levels of support for the initiative. Beyond specific initiatives, it is also essential to understand current and historical levels of trust as well as existing relationships between the community and the schools and their partners.

Readiness

Readiness refers to the motivation and collective capacity of an entity to adopt and sustain a change (Domlyn et al., 2021). In this construct, we include indicators that describe the readiness of key participants and organizations in desegregation and integration initiatives. Motivation readiness includes identifying shared expectations among initiative leadership and partners on the attributes of an intervention, the anticipated outcomes of an intervention, the pressures for change, and the depth of emotional investment (Dymnicki et al., 2014). The collective capacity of a school and community to adopt and implement these initiatives includes both an organization's general capacity (e.g., its leadership and culture or climate) as well as the initiative-specific capacity of an organization to implement a project (e.g., staff skills, an initiative champion).

Indicators identified from the literature and member conversations include Organizational Values, Model Codification, and Action Plans and Timelines.

Organizational Values describes elements of organizations' foundational priorities, beliefs, and culture that can be leveraged to define the path for desegregation and integration initiatives. Organizational values are often codified in an articulated value proposition (e.g., mission or vision statement). Initiative leaders should make explicit connections between organizational value statements and the desegregation and integration work (Williams, 2010). Specifically, initiative leaders should define the extent to which organizational values align with the priorities of desegregating or integrating schools. From studies of readiness, the degree to which organizational values are aligned with the perceived value and goals of an initiative is often a predictor of the extent to which staff and affected participants are likely to be able to implement the planned change (Dymnicki et al., 2014; Scaccia et al., 2014). To foster these conditions, leaders can establish management practices designed to include multilevel leaders, staff, and key partners as vocal program advocates to continue to communicate and operationalize the organizational vision (Schraeder et al., 2005).

Model Codification refers to how organizations develop and document the desegregation or integration initiative's vision, goals, activities, and outcomes. Projects should set an initiative-specific vision and goals to set program direction and to anchor efforts to maintain consistency in implementation and sustain efforts over time (Bart & Baetz, 1996; The Dissemination Working Group, 1999; Fixsen et al., 2005). Research suggests that vision statements and goals are more likely to foster success across the lifespan of the initiative if they are developed collaboratively with a wide range of partners (Anderson, n.d.; Goodman & Sanders Thompson, 2017). To codify the steps to accomplishing the initiative vision and goals, leaders may build a logic model or theory of action. These models describe the project context, identify key actors, and define the project inputs and outputs that lead to a desired set of improved short- and

long-term outcomes (Anderson, n.d.). These models can help initiatives clearly define their scope of work, remain on target throughout implementation, and codify core program components for future evaluation and replication in other settings (The Dissemination Working Group, 1999; Fixsen et al., 2005; Taplin et al., 2013). Finally, research suggests that effective organizations commit to systemic documentation, retention, and transfer of program knowledge and implementation practices (Kumar et al., 2021). Programs that codify implementation practices are more resilient to change and more likely to sustain initiative practices and priorities (Fiedler & Welp, 2010).

Action Plans and Timelines refers to plans and timelines that should operationalize the initiative logic model or theory of action by establishing specific action steps, identifying people who will be responsible for completing each step, mapping out realistic timelines, and defining potential measures for evaluating progress and outcomes. These plans should be driven by local needs and input from collaborators and should be informed by staff capacity, available resources, and alignment with other initiatives (Rockwell & Bennett, 2004; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2018).

Resource Expenditure

Underpinning the success of any initiative are the resources that are devoted to meeting goals and carrying out planned activities (Fixsen et al., 2005). Leaders of desegregation and integration initiatives must allocate their resources, including time and funding, intentionally to successfully advance their initiatives. As part of this process, leaders must focus not only on providing sufficient resources to move the initiative forward but also on alignment, ensuring that resources support and reinforce one another (e.g., securing funding to hire additional staff who can then be trained to pursue aligned and sustainable funding; Fixsen et al., 2005).

Indicators identified from the literature and member conversations include Staffing, Training, and Funding.

Staffing refers to hiring, staff placement, and staff resource allocation and is essential to achieving positive outcomes. Leaders must invest in recruiting and retaining staff with values, dedicated responsibilities, and time that align with the vision, goals, and activities of an initiative (Dymnicki et al., 2017; Harris & Larsen, 2016; Weiler & Hinnant-Crawford, 2021). Selecting staff to ensure that organizational demographics align with the demographics of communities served (e.g., by race, ethnicity, language fluency) may be important to effectively achieving organizational goals. For example, education research has shown that being taught by teachers of the same race can have a positive impact for students of color (Blazar, 2024; Egalite et al., 2015; Smith et al., 2018). However, it is important to note that in many communities, particularly rural communities and those undergoing demographic transitions, better alignment may require nontraditional recruitment efforts or recruiting outside the local area. In addition to aligning staff with organizational goals, staffing is also integral to initiative leadership. A small number of staff should be selected to bear primary responsibility for advancing the desegregation or integration initiative. These individuals should be natural champions of the work and should have the expertise, connections, and authority to effectively advance it (Dymnicki et al., 2017; Fixsen et al., 2005). Finally, staff are more likely to be successful and stay in their positions if they are provided with the resources they need, including time and compensation (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Simon & Johnson, 2015).

Training refers to the essential work of building buy-in for initiative goals while ensuring staff have the capacity to implement initiative activities (Joyce & Showers, 2002; King, 2021; Weiler & Hinnant-Crawford, 2021). Research suggests that training is essential for both programs and people; high-quality training contributes to positive initiative outcomes and to increased staff retention rates (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Simon & Johnson, 2015). To increase staff buy-in and to ensure alignment of training and needs, leaders should collaborate with staff who will participate in training for select offerings (Macy & Wheeler, 2020). Furthermore, training is more likely to be effective if it includes opportunities to actively

participate, practice applying new skills in context to get feedback, and engage in ongoing learning (Joyce & Showers, 2002). In addition, research suggests training that specifically targets adult mindsets and biases that have perpetuated inequitable systems can help advance equitable learning environments (Gay, 2010; King, 2021; Wallace, 2021).

Funding refers to the sourcing and provision of dedicated financial resources for desegregation and integration initiatives and is essential to the success of any effort (Fixsen et al., 2005; Schoenwald, 1997). Many of the critical steps in launching an initiative, including staffing and training as well as building data systems and collaborative infrastructure, require additional funding. Research suggests that even when initiatives are proven to be effective, they are unlikely to be sustained if their sources of funding disappear (Fixsen et al., 2005). Leaders and participants must source and allocate dedicated sustainable funding for an initiative to advance it (Frankenberg et al., 2010; Kahlenberg, 2012). Furthermore, although adequate funding is necessary for programmatic success, strategically aligning funds with initiative visions, goals, and data may ultimately be more important to ensuring success (Fixsen et al., 2005; McCormick et al., 2005; Panzanaro et al., 2005).

Communication and Engagement

Effective desegregation and integration initiatives use intentional communication strategies, from building awareness to fostering deeper engagement and advancing their goals. To ensure that communication strategies effectively advance initiative goals, organizations must define a communication activity's purpose and audience, align the communication mode with its intended audiences, and plan for bidirectional communication between the initiative team and intended audiences (Agunda, 1989; Aldana et al., 2021; Bierbaum & Sunderman, 2021; Guo-Brennan, 2020; IES, 2010; Sayers, 2006; Tractenberg et al., 2019).

Indicators identified from the literature and member conversations include Communications Plans, Communication to Build Awareness, Progress Updates, Meaningful Opportunities to Engage, and Communication to Engage Diverse Populations.

Communications Plans refers to road maps that help initiative leaders and staff target and coordinate messaging to achieve their desired outcomes (Regional Educational Laboratories Southwest, n.d.). A strong communications plan should include specific goals for communications activities, target audiences, key messages and strategies for dissemination, and metrics that evaluate the success of communications activities (IES, 2010). Plans should be holistic, incorporating communications activities that align with the needs of different audiences, goals, and stages of the initiative. Communication plans can also include continuous improvement benchmarks and measures (e.g., engagement analytics). Such benchmarks allow the team to ensure that initiative leadership regularly assesses communication effectiveness to identify and replicate successful communication efforts and address areas for improvement.

Communication to Build Awareness refers to outreach strategies for reaching internal team members, external contributors, and other interested parties to build support for the work and influence public opinion. These communications focus on an initiative's justification and vision (the why) as well as its strategic approach and desired outcomes (the how; Sayers, 2006). Research literature and practice models suggest that because potential target audiences are diverse, initiative leaders must select the messaging platform (e.g., newsletter, press release), outreach strategy (e.g., public forum, email), and tailored message content with the target audience in mind (Agunda, 1989). Tailoring the message means ensuring that the information is relevant to the target audiences' interests and roles and is both intellectually and emotionally persuasive (Klockner, 2015). For invested external groups, this may include educating to build buy-in for initiative goals and creating opportunities for active engagement. For students, it may include providing the history and context behind the initiatives to galvanize student advocacy and action (Aldana et al., 2021). For families and policymakers, this may include providing information on the current state of desegregation and the impact that inaction or

opposition could have on students and schools to help communities build toward collaborative and sustained action (Bierbaum & Sunderman, 2021; Guo-Brennan, 2020).

Progress Updates refers to regular updates provided throughout the implementation and refinement stages of an initiative to maximize engagement and sustain buy-in. Leaders may plan to share real-time information with both internal and external audiences about an initiative's progress toward stated goals. Regular progress updates help build external transparency and public accountability for the desegregation or integration initiative's goals. Research and practice models suggest that sharing both promising emerging results and challenges that the initiative has faced can help increase buy-in (Harris & Neely, 2021). To share these updates, organizations may publish regular reports about the initiative, including evidence-based updates, wins, and challenges; provide less formal regular updates through newsletters or quarterly updates; and regularly convene key internal and external collaborators to create dialogue on important updates.

Meaningful Opportunities to Engage refers to efforts in school desegregation and integration initiatives that give interested parties (including partners, families, students, community members, and district/school staff) regular opportunities to provide input and make decisions about initiative priorities and strategic direction (Tractenberg et al., 2019). To ensure that engagement activities are meaningful, initiatives should have mechanisms in place to integrate the perspectives of and decisions made by interested parties into existing initiative planning and continuous improvement processes (Ishimaru, 2014). Interested parties should be regularly updated on how their recommendations are used to improve or adapt the initiative (Ihlen, 2013; McKinsey, 2020).

Communications to Engage Diverse Populations refers to efforts initiative leaders make to design engagement opportunities that reach a broad cross-section of interested parties, including students, families, community members, school staff, and partner organizations representing diverse expertise and lived experience. This may include designing engagement opportunities that align with the needs of a wide variety of interested parties or offering multiple opportunities to engage through varying modalities designed to meet diverse needs. Systems-change research and implementation models suggest that the people most affected by the initiative goals should be the highest engagement priority (Tractenberg et al., 2019). To engage diverse populations, it is essential to craft communication based on a deep understanding of the audience; to select modes of communication and messaging that best align with audiences' assets and needs; and to create and sustain opportunities for meaningful engagement that drive action and continuous improvement (Leithwood, 2021).

Cross-System Collaboration

Desegregation and integration initiatives are complex; they involve dismantling systems of cross-sectoral and institutionalized inequities. As a result, districts and schools cannot tackle the problem of segregation alone. By collaborating with partners, districts and schools have opportunities to generate more effective solutions and tap into expanded resources and expertise (Bryson et al., 2015; Demirag et al., 2012; Kettl, 2015). To effectively contribute to systems change, collaboration efforts should include clear roles and responsibilities, an understanding of and space for diverse mental models,³ and strong relationships and trust among collaborators (McGah & Saavedra, 2015).

Indicators identified from the literature and member interviews include partnership structures and collaboration activities.

Partnership Structures refers to a framework for formal and informal relationships with other organizations or groups that support an integration or desegregation initiative's goals and activities (Murry et al., 2014; Williams, 2010). Partnerships build the collective capacity of organizations to move toward initiative outcomes, maximizing the strengths and resources of different groups. Effective cross-system partnerships often include both internal partners, such as other departments within the district, and external partners, such as housing organizations; other municipal organizations, such as departments of child and family services; youth advisory councils or other youth-led groups; parent-teacher organizations or other family-led groups; and other schools or districts championing similar initiatives. Research emphasizes the importance of codifying partnerships and their activities to support shared accountability to initiative goals and resource-sharing commitments. Codification strategies include establishing norms of operation, memoranda of understanding, and jointly held mission or vision statements for the collaborative initiative (Bryson et al., 2015; Koschmann et al., 2012). However, interview data also highlight the importance of informal partnerships, through which organizations or even individuals collaborate to accomplish tasks that align with both groups' goals. Both formal and informal partnerships can benefit from a shared purpose or vision, clearly defined roles and pathways for decision making, opportunities for inclusive participation, and relationship capital built on mutual respect and trust (Bryson et al., 2015; Morse, 2010; National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare [NCASW], 2022). Structures for collaboration have been demonstrated to be most successful when they allow for flexibility and change.

Collaboration Activities refers to the mechanisms that allow for productive work across systems that support desegregation and integration initiatives. Collaboration activities make up

³ Mental models are internal assumptions and beliefs that people and organizations carry with them that can drive action or resistance.

the how of the work and can give each partner a clear idea of their role, expectations of how the collaborative relationship will function, and shared goals. Collaboration involves any activity that generates or maintains the buy-in of the organizations or audiences, contributes to developing partnership structures, or supports the mission and programs of one or both organizations. Determining roles, setting expectations for decision making, and designing governance structures (e.g., a tiered steering committee and work group model) are central collaboration activities that define the ways that cross-system groups organize themselves. Similarly, partnering organizations often engage in both formal resource sharing by distributing funds, data, staff time, and other resources, and they engage in informal resource sharing by building a layered understanding of community context and history, sharing promising practices, and engaging in collective problem solving (Bryson et al., 2015; NCASW, 2022).

Continuous Improvement

Continuous Improvement includes indicators focused on measuring and improving initiative effectiveness. Research suggests that a structured continuous improvement process should include a regular review of the initiative's vision and goals, an assessment of progress toward those goals, and related planning to scale effective practices and modify or stop ineffective practices (Francis et al., 2021; Park et al., 2013; Stein, 2012; Rockwell & Bennett, 2004).

Indicators identified from the literature and member interviews include Data Infrastructure, Evaluating Effectiveness, and Quality Improvement.

Data Infrastructure refers to the data systems, data collection practices, and staff capabilities that organizations need to effectively conduct monitoring and improvement activities. Specifically for desegregation and integration initiatives, an organization's data infrastructure and data use practices can be key tools for identifying systemic inequities, understanding the root-cause structures and practices that maintain school segregation, and developing and monitoring strategies to advance equitable outcomes for students (Datnow et al., 2017). In alignment with the a desegregation or integration initiative's goals and strategic priorities, organizational leaders can identify desired outcomes, outline ways they will measure progress toward those outcomes, and then build these decisions into their organizations' data collection and analysis systems and timelines (Datnow & Park, 2014). Data systems, like a student information system, can provide organizations with data storage and reporting functions that align with their outcome measurement activities. Interviews with Bridges Collaborative Member Organizations suggest that although many districts pursuing desegregation or integration initiatives already have a student information system in place, initiative leaders should work with system administrators to ensure the included data and reporting functions meet their specific needs. If existing data do not align with initiative outcomes, organizations can establish guidance to define consistent measures and timelines for supplemental data collection. Finally, organizations should identify personnel (including internal staff and staff at partner organizations) and ensure they are trained to collect, analyze, and report on initiative data in alignment with established goals and guidance.

Evaluating Effectiveness refers to a series of activities designed to test progress toward the initiative vision, goals, and outcomes (Rockwell & Bennett, 2004; Taplin et al., 2013). Research provides many different dimensions on which programs can be evaluated, including how knowledge, skills, and beliefs are built; whether behaviors change; whether outcomes change; and, ultimately, whether local conditions and context change (Rockwell & Bennett, 2004). In addition to measuring outcomes, implementation science research also stresses the importance of evaluating initiative planning and implementation. This process-focused evaluation is designed to ensure that effective initiatives can be replicated and scaled by documenting

program components, implemented activities, spent resources, and participant perceptions of the program (Fixsen et al., 2005; Rockwell & Bennet, 2004). If an initiative already has an established evidence base, its leaders should plan to document and evaluate implementation to determine if the program is being implemented with fidelity to the original model (Fixsen et al., 2005).

Quality Improvement refers to the requirement that organization leaders and staff be trained to integrate a systematic, formalized continuous improvement process into new initiatives. Through continuous improvement, initiative leaders periodically review progress to ensure the initiative continues to help the community progress toward the defined vision and goals (The Dissemination Working Group, 1999; Fixsen et al., 2005; Park et al., 2013). Research suggests that continuous improvement processes are more likely to be effective if they occur cyclically, at set times, and at sufficient intervals to ensure that progress can occur and meaningful data be collected (The Dissemination Working Group, 1999; Fixsen et al., 2004; Park et al., 2013).

Sustainability

Sustainability is a measure of how organizations are prepared to grow and maintain initiatives. Organizations that plan for sustainability plan for the internal and external factors that can affect how an initiative will be supported and managed, including leadership, staffing, funding, and continuous improvement activities.

Indicators identified from the literature and member interviews include a Sustainability Plan, Staffing Sustainability, and Resource Sustainability.

Sustainability Plan refers to the intentionally documented road maps for how the initiative will grow and be maintained. Planning for sustainability is a critical way to ensure that desegregation and integration initiatives remain recognized and resourced priorities for a community. A shared plan is also a way to maintain consistent goals and aligned strategies for the initiative. Elements of the plan can include short- and long-term goals; evaluation of the program processes and outcomes; staffing, including onboarding and retention of staff and leaders; and finances (Johnson et al., 2004). Sustainability plans can also serve as living histories of an initiative, ensuring that future leaders have a deep understanding of the contextual factors, facilitators, and barriers that informed the initiative's progress and success over time.

Staffing Sustainability refers to the process through which initiative leaders work to sustain leadership and staffing and to ensure that transition plans are in place to retain institutional knowledge when faced with inevitable turnover. Research suggests that personnel are essential to initiative sustainability (Dymnicki et al., 2017; Harris & Larsen, 2016; Weiler & Hinnant-Crawford, 2021). Staff are often key to sustaining efforts both because of the importance of individual commitment and ownership in driving initiatives forward and because of the extent to which individual staff are often the keepers of institutional knowledge important to initiative success. In addition, retaining staff can be important to maintaining project funding as well as accessing new funding, depending on staff roles. Because leadership and staff turnover cannot be wholly avoided, examples from research and practice suggest planning for turnover is important, as is developing transition plans for key roles and building teams that are large enough to maintain efforts during transitions (Pan et al., 2021).

Resource Sustainability refers to the process through which initiative leaders ensure that resources, such as funding, can be sustained. If initiatives are implemented over long periods, access to resources will inevitably change. Often, initiatives must weather changes in accessible funding sources while also navigating changing funding needs as they seek to scale effective practices. Bridges Collaborative Member Organizations and the project management literature indicate that having a fund dedicated solely to the initiative and its implementation improves the likelihood of its execution and potential success (Stevens & Peikes, 2006). Further, the

literature also suggests that braiding funding from multiple sources can improve long-term initiative success (Ensign & Kain, 2020; Gonzalez & Caranongan, 2021).

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