

Advancing Alignment in School Mental Health (SMH)

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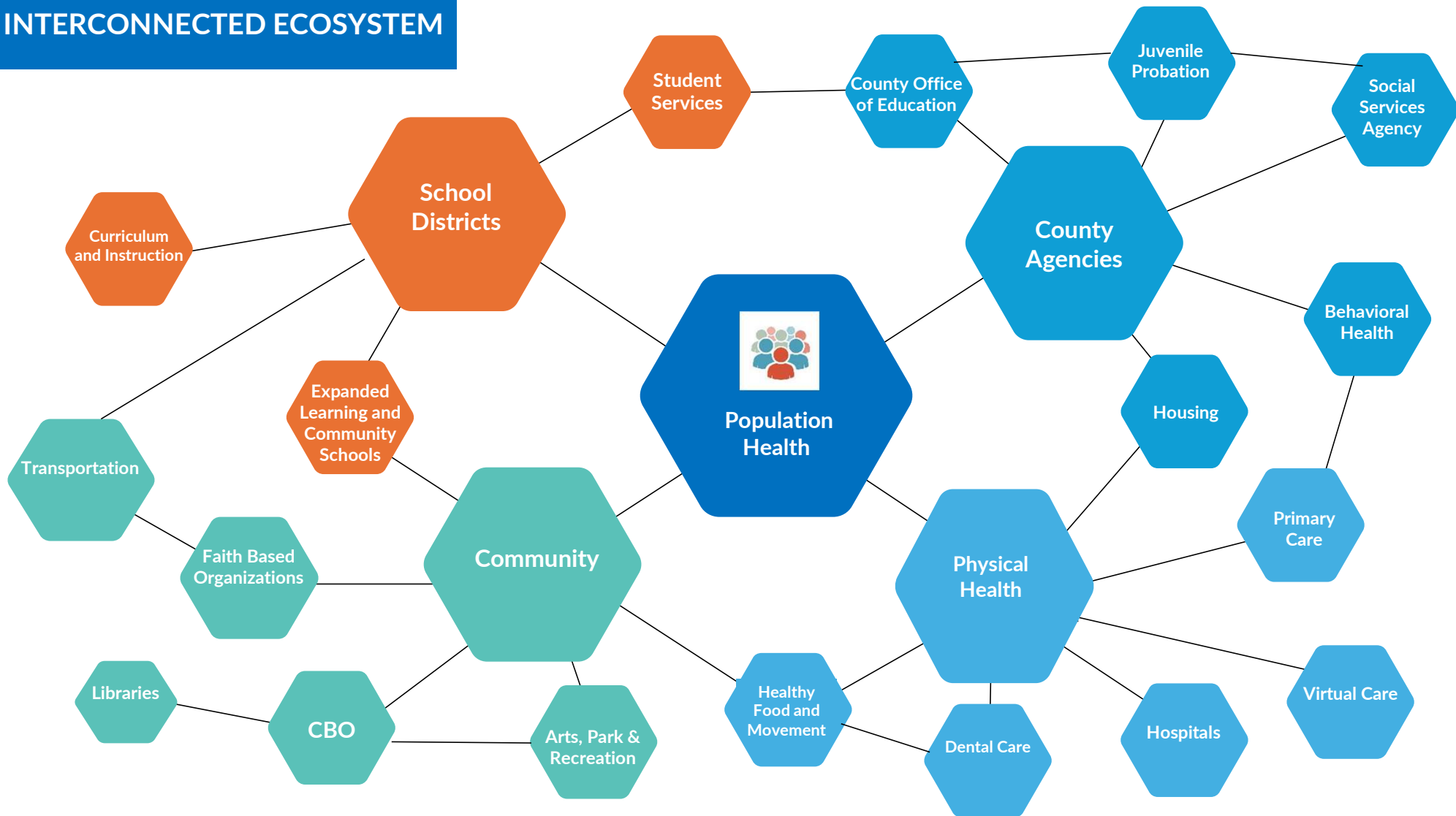
Global Leadership Exchange, SMH Match, Toronto 6.1.26

Alignment Defined



- Alignment:
 - “To be in precise adjustment or correct relative position”
 - “The proper positioning of parts in relation to each other”
- McIntosh (2015): “One of the major variables affecting sustained implementation of effective practices is the introduction of new initiatives that either (a) compete with resources needed for sustained implementation or (b) contradict existing initiatives.”

INTERCONNECTED ECOSYSTEM



Dimensions of Alignment

Across Research, Practice and Policy

How are we doing?

Policy to practice

Policy to research

Research to practice

Research to policy

Practice to research

Practice to policy

Dimensions of Alignment cont.

- Across youth-serving agencies in a community
- Between state education agencies (SEAs), districts and schools (vertical)
- Across SEAs, districts and schools (horizontal)
- Across tiers of the multi-tiered system of support (MTSS)
- Across disciplines (e.g., for school psychology, counseling, social work, nursing, community providers working in schools)
- Accounting for key dimensions of contexts (e.g., culture, community strengths/needs)
- In relation to other data and evaluations that are happening (e.g., within a district or state)
- In relation to funding opportunities

SMHILE Project ?

- Develop an alignment tool around these (and other) dimensions?

Why Focus on Alignment?

U.S. Workers' Burnout Rates by Industry, 2022

Percent indicate how often the following is true of your job. You feel burned out at work.

SB1

	% Always/Very often
K-12 education	44
College or university	35
Professional services	33
Government or public policy	33
Retail	32
Healthcare	31
Law	31
Entertainment	29
Manufacturing	28
Technology	25
Utilities	25
Construction	22
Community/Social services	22
Finance	21

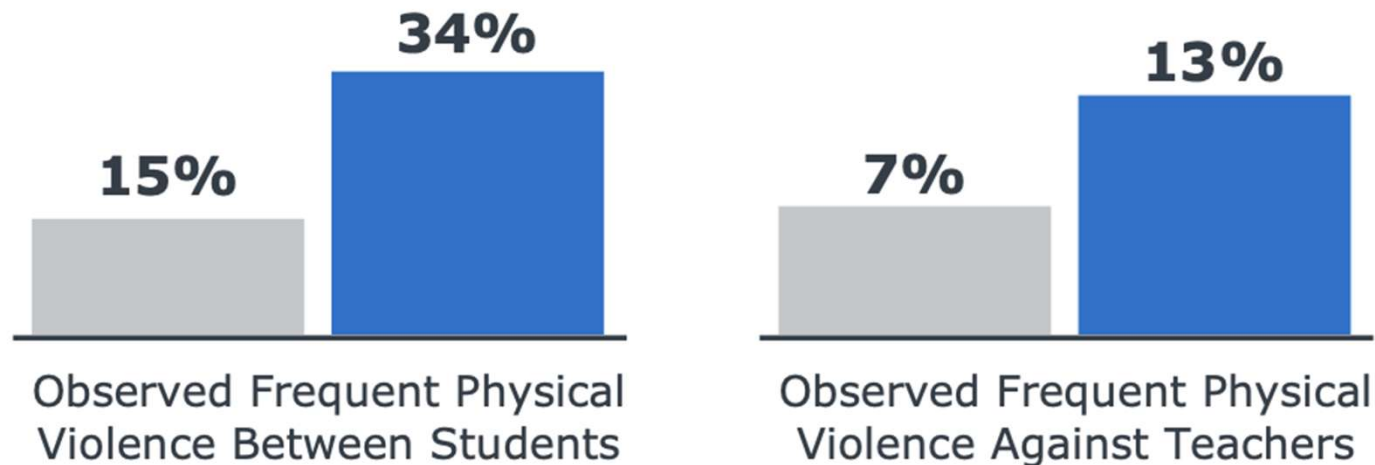
FEB. 3-14, 2022 • Get the data

GALLUP

Slide 8

SB1 will need updated rates for Canada
Susan Barrett, 2026-05-02T15:33:30.655

Behaviors involving physical violence are on the rise

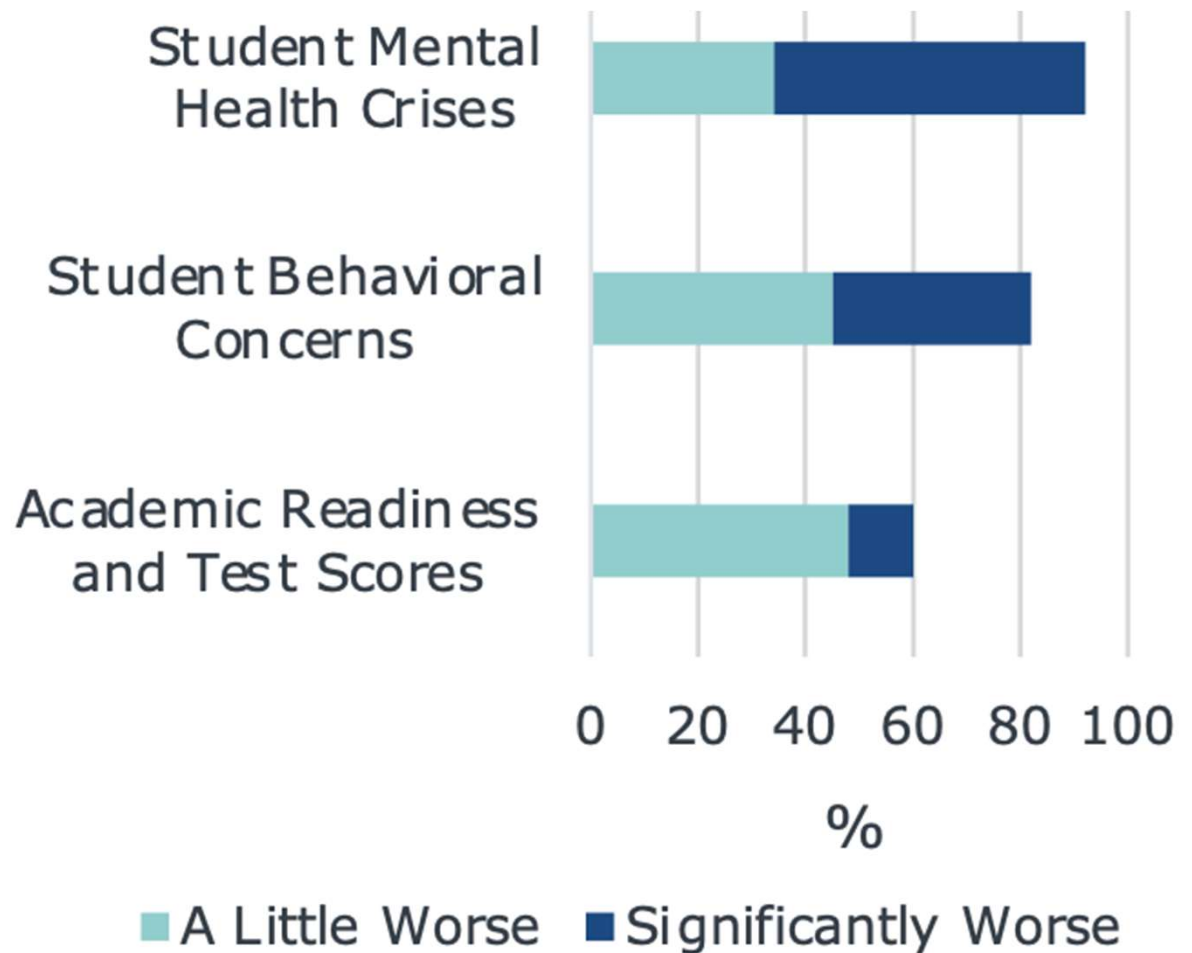


KEY: ■ 2018 ■ 2022

Source: EAB data, interviews and analysis.

Greatest Changes Seen in Behavior and Mental Health

- Percentage of superintendents who say the following categories are worse now than in 2019



Why Invest in Alignment?

- **Unaligned efforts are ineffective and inefficient**
- Doing many things, but none of them well
- Assumption that New is better... More is better
- Political value of “touching” many efforts (“we have _____ in our school”)
- Assumption that if we train individuals in many things THEY will do the alignment and integration on their own

A word cloud of educational and behavioral terms arranged in a circular pattern. The terms are enclosed in circles of various colors: blue, green, orange, and grey. The central text is a green banner with white text.

There are far more teams than time

PBIS

Behavioral
Threat
Assessment

Student
Services

Restorative
Practices

Bully
Prevention

College
and
Career
Ready

Mindfulness

Suicide
Prevention

Grade
Level

Care

RTI

Engagement

Professional
Learning
Communities

Social
Emotional
Learning

Wellness

Equity

MTSS

School
Safety

LMNOP

Literacy
STEM

Challenge:

- We have too many “programs” “initiatives” or “practices” to implement them all with fidelity
- No one entity can do this alone, we need each other
- Key Question: How to align for efficiency and effectiveness?





Interconnected Thinking invites us to “deal with complex problems in a systematic, integrated, and collaborative fashion; working together to deal with issues holistically, rather than simplistically focusing on isolated features.” (Nguyen& Bosch, 2014)



Synonyms: coordinated, unified, integrated, formed into a whole



The action or intent to work together



in a different way...



MTSS is one of the most efficient pathways to transforming or strengthening systems, PBIS is the best example of well-done MTSS

It is a strategy for managing complex transformation

(Fixsen et al., 2005; Bryk, Gormez, Grunow, & LeMahieu, 2015)

USC ECHO FOR SMH

Pilot Cohort 1 (2025-26)

- 4 state teams: KY, MN, NC, NV
- Training workshop (1 day)
- 10 monthly teleECHO sessions
- Didactic topics included: teaming, aligning EBPs across tiers, funding, cultural responsiveness, family and youth partnerships, data-based decision-making, progress monitoring.
- Teams presented 2 cases with opportunity for iterative feedback.

Cohort 2 (2026-27)

- 4 state teams: MI, OK, UT, VA
- Training workshop (1 day)
- 10 monthly teleECHO sessions
- Didactic topics will be selected by participants from a range of best practice topics relating to SBH implementation.
- Teams will present 2 cases with opportunity for iterative feedback.

CASE EXAMPLES

How can school **districts systematically provide protocols and supports** to address school-based behaviors and social/emotional concerns within the MTSS framework?

How can we **measure efficacy and fidelity of Tier 1** mental health/SEL programming, particularly at the secondary level?

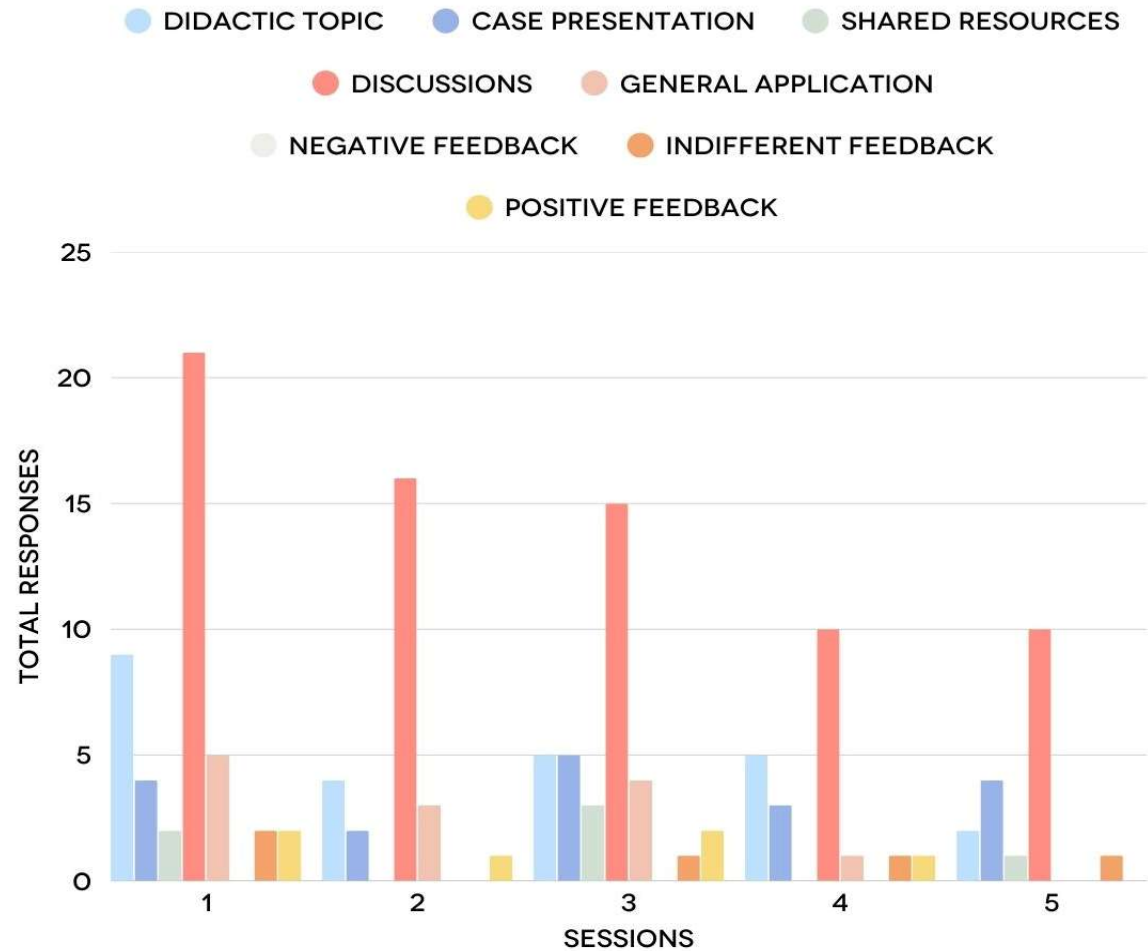
How do we **duplicate success and sustainability of the PBIS/MTSS/ISF implementation in our smaller, rural districts with fewer resources?** How have other states increased partnerships in close knit communities?

How can we **meet the mental health needs of students with limited providers**, protect provider well-being, enhance provider skill level, support LEAs when need exceeds capacity and ongoing fiscal sustainability

POST-SESSION SURVEY FEEDBACK

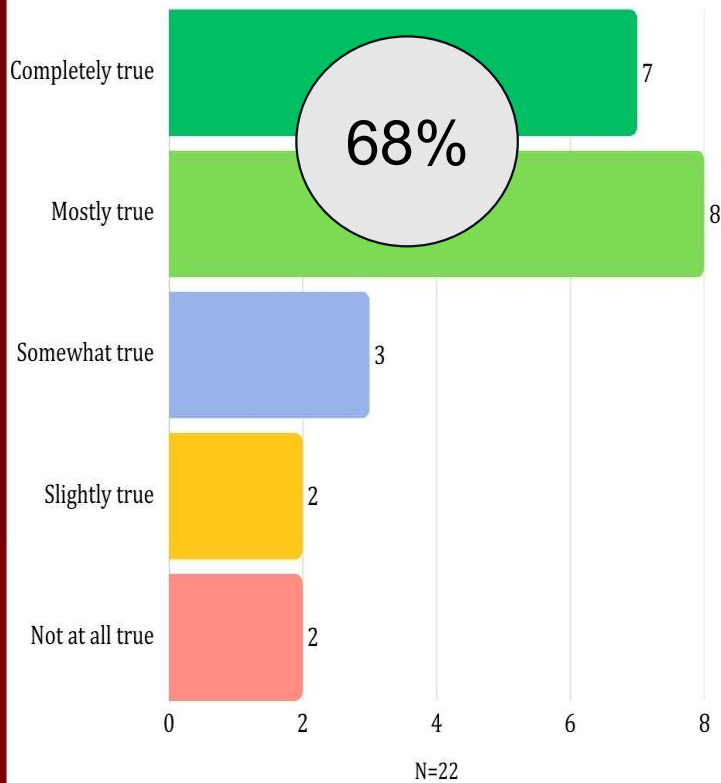
Discussion
is most helpful
for learning

WHAT PART OF THIS SESSION WAS MOST HELPFUL
TO YOUR LEARNING?

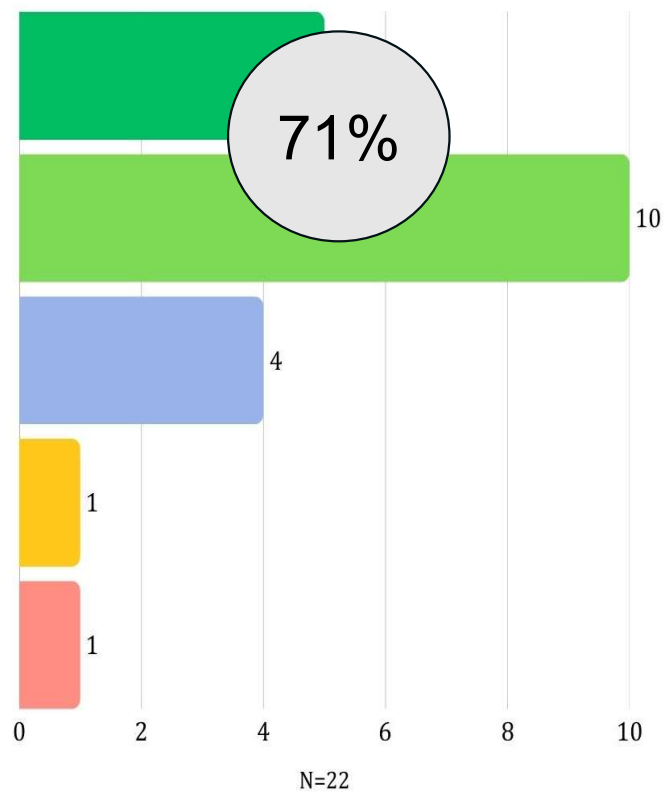


INCREASING CAPACITY

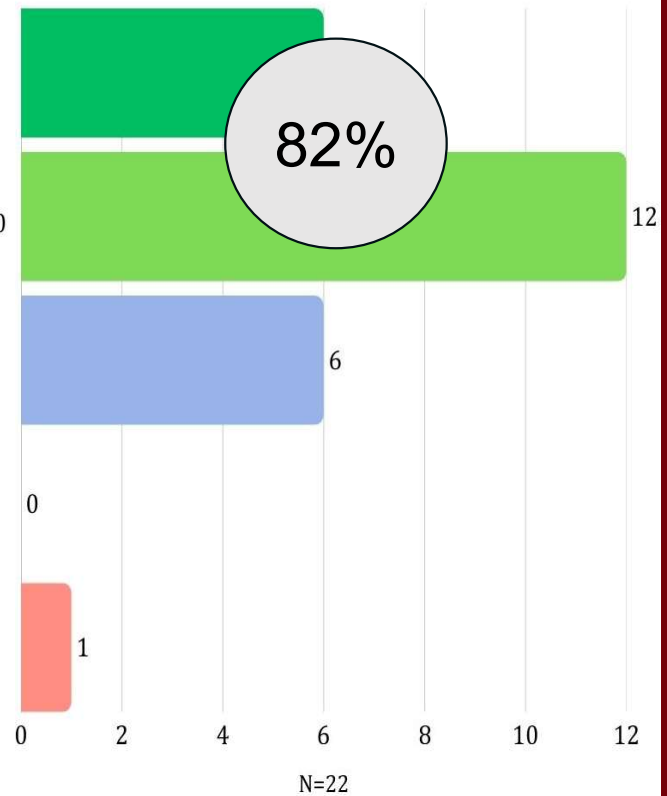
I have increased my capacity to help integrate behavioral health in school systems.



Our team has increased capacity to integrate behavioral health in school systems.



Overall, teams have increased capacity to integrate behavioral health in school systems.



IMPROVING VERTICAL COLLABORATION

91%

Team members communicate openly and effectively.

96%

Team members support each other on problem-solving and decision-making.

95%

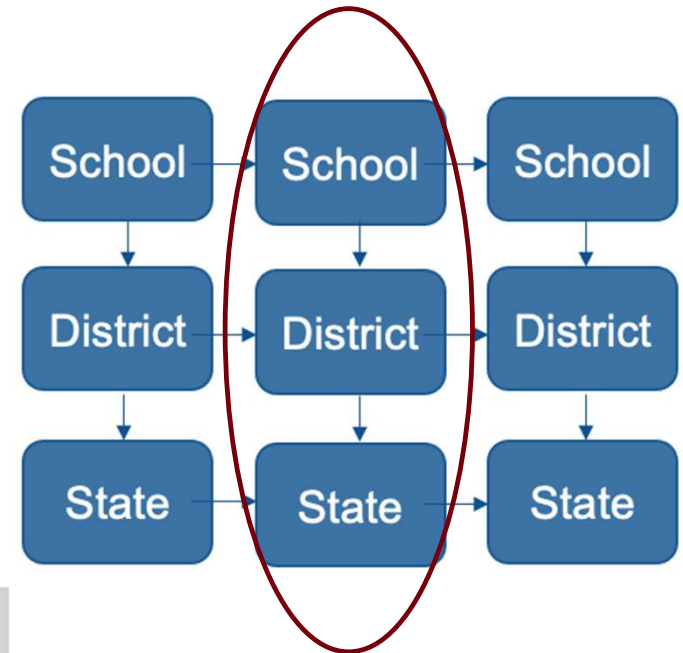
Team members align on shared goals.

99%

Team members display trust and mutual respect.

82%

Monthly ECHO sessions have increased my collaboration within my state team.



IMPROVING HORIZONTAL COLLABORATION

74%

Monthly ECHO sessions have increased my collaboration across state teams.

95%

In sessions, teams communicate openly and effectively.

100%

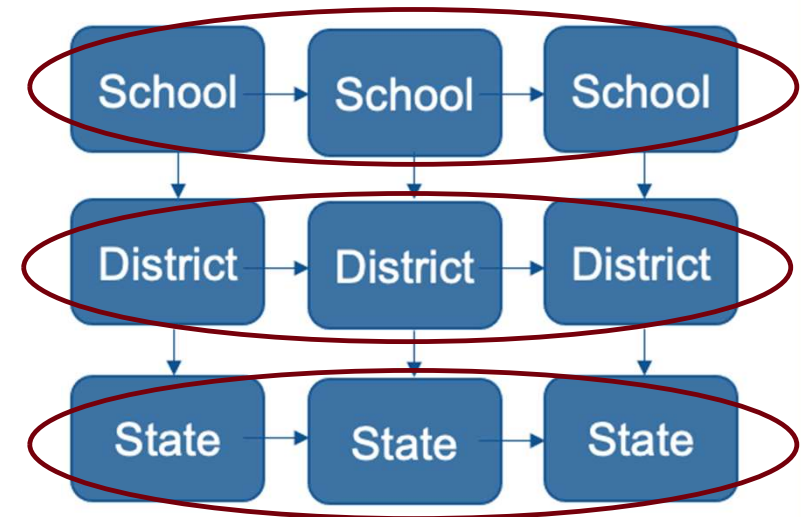
In sessions, teams support each other on problem-solving and decision-making.

95%

In sessions, teams share knowledge and resources.

100%

In sessions, teams display trust and mutual respect.



Thank you !

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