

## Our Motivation

What makes our work so gratifying is the opportunity to work with visionary education leaders. We are energized at every opportunity to meet with district and school leaders to listen and to understand their problems of practice to identify and support sustainable solutions. We firmly believe the ideal partner relationship is one that is committed to continuous improvement, has clear roles and responsibilities, has a shared vision for the partnership, and is willing to reciprocate in a relationship that moves at the speed of trust. In this issue, we feature the stories of three districts at different points in their partner relationship journey with us. These districts and their schools exemplify what it means to have the vision to build the capacity of their leaders and teachers to improve teaching and learning. We also share resources from experts from the American Institutes for Research (AIR) that are assured to enhance your practice in supporting students.

We are here for you, and like you, we are determined to make a difference in supporting districts and schools in delivering the best education to prepare students to be the best they can be.

If you are motivated to seek a partner who has walked in your shoes, [click here to schedule](#) a conversation or e-mail us at [dsicenter@air.org](mailto:dsicenter@air.org). Visit our website at [www.air.org/dsicenter](http://www.air.org/dsicenter) to learn more.

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## Client Testimonial: Zion Elementary School District 6

In Zion, Illinois, district leaders worked with the District and School Improvement (DSI) Center to create a week-long intensive leadership academy for school-level leaders. The leadership academy focused on preparing leaders to develop actionable school improvement plans that would drive the school improvement process. Leaders engaged in a deep data dive processing their own school-level data to examine current practices identifying successes and evidence-based strategies to address challenges to strengthen their school improvement plans and teams. Here's what school leaders had to say about their experience:

**"Never thought school improvement planning could be both informative AND engaging!"—Monica Munoz, Principal, East Elementary School**

**"I feel that the [leadership] academy helped prepare me to be a better leader. I have learned the importance of shared/collaborative leadership, which led to a better start of the school year."—Michael Karner, Assistant Principal, Zion Central Middle School**

## New on video: DSI Field Stories

### Enhancing Instructional Practices Through Professional Learning Communities in Virginia

[Prince William County Public Schools](#), the second-largest school district in Virginia, has a long-standing reputation as a high-achieving school district. The DSI Center at AIR worked with division and school leaders to build on their foundation for collaborative team practice. Meet Christy Taylor, director of the Office of Professional Learning for Prince William County. Watch as she and Prince William County school staff share their journey partnering with teachers to deliver consistent practices to perform better and build the capacity of district staff to support and sustain their work with AIR as their support.



[Click to view Prince William County video](#)

## Stories of Continuous Improvement in Illinois

The DSI team partnered with two Illinois school districts on their continuous improvement journey: [East Aurora School District 131](#) and [Round Lake School District 116](#), located in suburban Chicago. Meet Dr. Jennifer Norrell, superintendent of East Aurora School District 131 and Dr. Donn Mendoza, superintendent of Round Lake School District 116 and their teams. Watch the story of our collaboration as we journey together using AIR's school improvement path to meet critical needs in leadership, school climate and culture, and teaching and learning to provide equity and improvement for all students.



[Click to view East Aurora SD 131](#)



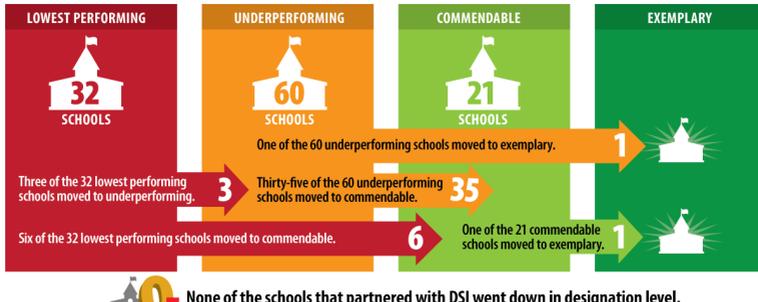
[Click to view Round Lake SD 116](#)

We would love to hear from you! Tell us what you think of these videos by e-mailing us at [dsicenter@air.org](mailto:dsicenter@air.org).

## Worth Celebrating

In Illinois, we are proud to serve as a professional learning partner for IL-EMPOWER, the state's system of support for districts and schools. Recently, Illinois released its annual school designation, the 2019 Illinois Report Card. The designation is based on the school's overall data for all of the accountability indicators, as well as the data for individual student groups. As a professional learning partner, our DSI team supports districts and schools in the development, implementation, and monitoring of their continuous improvement plans based on a comprehensive needs assessment, to align their plans to the Illinois Quality Framework and the Supporting Rubric.

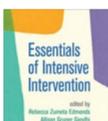
### In the 2018–19 school year, DSI provided support for 113 schools in Illinois:



- Forty-six schools improved their designation.
- Six of the 32 lowest performing schools moved to commendable.
- Three of the 32 lowest performing schools moved to underperforming.
- One of the 60 underperforming schools moved to exemplary.
- Thirty-five of the 60 underperforming schools moved to commendable.
- One of the 21 commendable schools moved to exemplary.
- None of the schools that partnered with DSI went down in designation level.

We don't tell our partners what to do or how to do it; we serve as a thought partner in helping them to achieve their goals. We congratulate our partners on their hard work, as the journey continues.

## Good Reads From AIR Experts



Look to enhance your knowledge of multi-tiered systems of support? Several members of AIR's Special Education Practice authored and edited [Essentials of Intensive Intervention](#), which was released by Guilford Press. The book includes resources and practical applications of work from the [National Center on Intensive Intervention](#), operated by AIR since 2011 and funded by the U.S. Office of Special Education Programs.



[Creating Safe, Equitable, Engaging Schools: A Comprehensive, Evidence-Based Approach to Supporting Students](#), published by Harvard Education Press, shares the collective research and practice experience of AIR staff. The book offers an essential guide for making sense of the myriad evidence-based frameworks, resources, and tools available to create a continuous improvement system and features chapters written by AIR school improvement experts [Catherine Barbour](#) and [Aaron Butler](#).

## From the Research

### Podcast: Research and Practice Tag Team for Continuous Improvement

Are you a fan of listening to podcasts for professional development? DSI's Managing Director [Catherine Barbour](#) and Managing Researcher [Kerstin LeFloch](#) tag team to provide education leaders with practical insight on how to apply research and implement best practices in school improvement.



[The Research to Practice Connection in School Improvement](#)

### AIR Releases Report to Assess the Effectiveness of Building Assets, Reducing Risks

Building Assets, Reducing Risk (BARR) is a comprehensive, strength-based approach to improving secondary school experiences and outcomes. Funded with a validation grant from the U.S. Department of Education's Investing in Innovation (i3) program, this evaluation used random assignment of ninth-grade students to BARR and control conditions to estimate the impacts of the BARR model after 1 year. AIR evaluators conducted a large-scale independent evaluation of the BARR model in ninth grade in 11 high schools across the country. Read more about the results of this study and the implications that can help inform the delivery of education for your system.

[Building Assets and Reducing Risks \(BARR\) Validation Study: Final Report](#)

Visit the [District and School Improvement](#) website to learn more about our available resources.

## Get to Know Our Team



**Trent Eisenbarth**  
Technical Assistance Consultant

**AIR experience:** I started with AIR as a District Liaison for the Illinois Center for School Improvement covering east central Illinois. I provide continuous improvement supports for districts and schools in Illinois and Indiana for the District and School Improvement Center at AIR.

**Professional experience:** Before joining AIR, I had 11 years of experience in elementary and junior high education, including district leadership team experience in central Illinois.

**Expertise:** Areas of expertise include continuous improvement planning, implementation, and monitoring with in-depth knowledge of support programs such as instructional supports, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), Response to Intervention (RTI), rural education, continuous improvement, supporting leadership under the constraints impacting rural school districts, and data analysis processes. I am also a certified CLASS Observer for K–3, upper elementary, and secondary schools.

**What do you love about your work?** I have been fortunate to work with a wonderful, diverse group of colleagues at AIR on various projects over the past 5 years. I am proud to represent AIR's values and knowledge of continuous improvement positively for improved outcomes in teaching and learning to districts and schools.

**Client success story?** There are so many stories to share, but one of my favorites is from recent work with Stephen Foster School 67, a K–8 school in Indianapolis, Indiana. I love partnering with districts and schools to do a deep dive into their data to unearth probable causes and supporting them in discovering solutions. I led a project team that conducted a comprehensive needs assessment that included an Intentional Data Review and Root Cause Analysis (RCA) process. We collaborated with district and school leadership for the school improvement planning process to develop goals and drivers for improvement based on key findings from the needs assessment and RCA. It was a productive partnership because the Stephen Foster School 67 leadership and teachers were so engaged, and that makes my work fun. I look forward to more opportunities to support education leaders in Indiana and other states.

[Click here and complete the contact form](#) to set up a 10-minute conversation so we can learn how we can meet the needs of your school leaders, teachers, or district. E-mail us at [dsicenter@air.org](mailto:dsicenter@air.org). Visit [www.air.org/dsicenter](http://www.air.org/dsicenter) to get to know us.