

## Are You Missing Summer?

The school year is in full swing, and the summer feels like a distant memory. Over the summer, not only did we rest, but we engaged in personal and professional development to gear up for another busy year. The District and School Improvement (DSI) Center at the American Institutes for Research team spent time this summer collaborating with education leaders to support them in maximizing their plans and sharpening their knowledge base with the best thinking to lead and instruct. Journey with us as we take a moment to reflect on how we spent our summer, what we read to inform our work, and stories of how our collaborations supported districts and schools in moving their vision forward.



**Catherine Barbour**



**Betheny Lyke, EdD**

### Co-Leads

District and School Improvement Center at  
The American Institutes for Research

To request a meeting with our school improvement experts [Click here](#), contact us at [dsicenter@air.org](mailto:dsicenter@air.org), or visit our website at [www.air.org/dsicenter](http://www.air.org/dsicenter) to learn more.

## Summer Enrichment for Stephen Foster 67



In Indiana, DSI partnered with Stephen Foster School 67 (K-8) in Indianapolis Public Schools to conduct a Comprehensive Needs Assessment that included a Root Cause Analysis process. From there, DSI 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 Root Cause Analysis. The team drew from research and best practices by infusing resources such as the Institute for Education Sciences' What Works Clearinghouse, Education Resources Information Center, and the Indiana Department of Education's Targeted Support and Improvement/Comprehensive Support and Improvement Resources, which have proven to transform systems.

"AIR provided school stakeholders with a systemic and systematic process to help analyze the status of the school, problem-solve, and initiate actions to produce positive impacts on student achievement over the course of the next school year and beyond."

– **Mary Kapcoe**, Data Strategist, Indianapolis Public Schools

"The content expertise and resources provided by the AIR team have made an invaluable impact on the creation and implementation of my school plan. Delving into multiple data points afforded us the opportunity to be focused, strategic, and intentional in our decision making. My leadership team and I look forward to a continued partnership!"

– **Debra Pickett**, Principal, Stephen Foster School 67

## Back to School for Cairo and Dongola's Faculty



In the rural communities of Cairo and Dongola in southern Illinois, DSI conducted a review of each district's data and key findings from our Continuous Improvement Process, which includes an Intentional Data Review and a Root Cause Analysis. DSI developed a set of professional development trainings for teachers and administrators focused on Social and Emotional Competencies, Depth of Knowledge and Rigor, Chronic Absenteeism, and Standards-Aligned Curriculum. Teachers and administrators are now prepared to use evidence-based and best practice strategies to support their school improvement efforts this year.

"AIR designed a week's worth of professional development (PD) over the summer that specifically targeted our district's needs. The PD was very worthwhile and exemplified many strategies that teachers and administrators could easily implement in their classrooms, the day-to-day operations, and to enhance rapport with students and families."

– **Ellie Rush**, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Dongola Unit School District 66

"It is a very, very good thing that we were together as a whole district. To be in the same room, we could understand everyone's perspective and given a platform to discuss district initiatives together."

– **De De O Shea**, Teacher, Cairo Elementary School

## Collaboration That Makes a Difference

### Utica City School District – Partners to Strengthen Leadership, Instruction, and Learning



In October 2013, AIR began work with Martin Luther King (MLK), Jr., Elementary School in Utica, New York. MLK was designated a priority school being among the lowest-performing 5% in the state. District and school staff were determined to improve instruction and entered into a collaborative partnership with DSI to provide support meeting that vision. AIR provided instructional and leadership coaching. The AIR leadership coach focused on building the principal's leadership skills, establishing a data-driven system, and developing a strong school leadership team.

The AIR instructional coaches worked in classrooms and with groups of teachers supporting professional development on the content and teaching strategies of new curricula in mathematics and ELA. As teachers' knowledge grew, coaching support shifted to implementing data-focused professional learning communities to refine teaching units and share teaching practices to meet the specific needs of MLK students.

As a result of the partnership, in 2018, Martin Luther King Elementary School was designated a school in good standing for New York state accountability. In 2019, the school saw continued increases in the percentage of students who were proficient in mathematics, science, and reading. Ashley Hayes, who started as an ELA coach at King in 2013 and now works across the district, said of her work with AIR over six years:

"Our partnership in the school turnaround process, building capacity in our schools in need, continues to be successful. We are sharing and implementing our successes gradually in all our elementary schools within our district. The AIR Coaching Model has helped me in working with teachers and grade-level teams, supporting their growth in curriculum and instruction. Our AIR team truly is vested in the success of our district."

## What We Are Reading

DSI Center leaders Catherine Barbour and Betheny Lyke, EdD, take a moment to share what they gleaned from their summer reading list to enhance their own development:



### Switch

by **Chip and Dan Heath**

Every organization, no matter the size or sector, struggles with effective change management. In this book, brothers Chip and Dan Heath share strategies for change management. Switch pushes the reader to think beyond structural changes (rational side) that one must implement and consider how we as humans (emotional side) respond to the change process. I read this book thinking about schools working to address closing achievement gaps or addressing new opportunities for students by looking for strategies to share to support that change process.



### Building Equity: Policies and Practices to Empower All Learners

by **Dominique Smith, Nancy Frey, Ian Pumpian, and Douglas Fisher**

Many school districts are requesting support in creating culturally competent staff, but I see cultural competency as a result of working in a school I system that has equity at its core. Building Equity informs how we can guide school leaders and teachers toward cultural competency by breaking down inaccurate belief systems to create and implement equitable systems and structures.

## Client Feedback Survey Results

At the end of the 2018-19 school year, we asked clients for feedback on services rendered. Below are quotes from actual survey respondents:

"AIR supplies awesome research-based practices that align to the needs of our system." – **District Administrator**

"AIR is thorough, professional, and has helped us kick-start a process for continuous improvement." – **District Administrator**

"AIR provided just-in-time and well-organized support to allow us to re-invent our School and District School Improvement Plans." – **District Administrator**

"We received the guidance we needed to set up systems that will benefit the entire district for years to come." – **District Administrator**

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