Continuous Improvement, Evaluation Cycles, and Scaling What Works in MMSD

for Board of Education

To ensure effective execution of our district strategy, we will utilize several crucial ways of working that build on our past practice but are in better alignment with our core values. In this document, we focus on our processes in three areas: Continuous Improvement, Evaluation Cycles, and Scaling What Works.

Continuous Improvement

In MMSD, our work around the Strategic Framework follows an Annual Planning Cycle, which involves periodic reviews of progress at all levels, annual data reporting, and evaluations of major plans and high-intensity partnerships.

Reviews of Progress

The central resource for planning within the cycle for each school is the School Improvement Plan (SIP) and the central resource for the Board of Education is the Strategic Framework.

For Schools

At monthly Principal Meetings, RPEO provides a set of recently available outcome data (such as assessment or survey results) at the district level, with school-specific resources available for school-based teams. Principals can take these materials back to their schools to engage in a building-based review. For schools, data reviews happen with their School-Based Leadership Team (SBLT). Principals and members of their SBLT meet regularly to discuss School Improvement Plan (SIP) and Strategic Framework progress, review data, and plan for the work ahead.

For Central Office

Throughout the year, the reports listed in this document are provided to Central Office leadership and program staff to allow them to examine district wide and school-based trends and to support decision-making.

For Board of Education

For the Board, reviews happen during board retreats with the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), at work group meetings, and at regular board meetings.

Annual Data Reporting

The table below reflects major data projects conducted by RPEO's research team and provided to the Board on an annual basis. For the 20-21 school year, the reporting year is 19-20 unless otherwise stated. Due to the district's response to COVID-19 and movement to virtual/distance learning in the third quarter of 19-20 and 20-21, many of the reports on the 19-20 school year will have major modifications, limitations, or may not be available due to limited data availability. In addition, some of the proposed dates/months for reporting will be slightly adjusted. **Please note that these projects do not reflect ad-hoc requests, one-time research projects, and regular consulting functions. These dates and topics are subject to change. The majority of these reports can be found at: https://accountability.madison.k12.wi.us/RPEO.**

Title	Month for Reporting	Update for 2020-21				
АСТ	Feb. 2021	Previously was the ACT/Aspire Report				
	(was Oct. in 2019)	Data note: Report on 19-20 data will have statewide test day data only; no Aspire data available for 19-20.				
Hmong Student Data	Feb. 2021 (was Oct. in 2019)	Data note: MAP data is only available through 18-19; update for high school completion rate available (18-19); limited behavior data and attendance data for 19-20.				
American Indian Student	Feb. 2021	Data note: MAP data is only available through 18-19; update				
Data	(was Oct. in 2019)	for high school completion rate available (18-19); limited behavior data and attendance data for 19-20.				
MAP	No update for 2020	Students did not take Spring MAP in 2020, which was our				
	(was Oct. in 2019)	typical accountability assessment for grades 3-8.				
PALS	No update for 2020	Students did not take Spring PALS in 2020, which was our				
	(was Oct. in 2019)	typical end-of-year assessment for grades K-2.				
Opportunity Youth (DPI	Nov. 2020	Data note: Will have limited data available for the 19-20				
At-Risk)	(was Nov. in 2019)	school year.				
Attendance	Dec. 2020	Data note: Will have limited data available for the 19-20 school year.				
Behavior	Moved to Quarterly Reports to the BOE	Note: These are now quarterly reports that are prepared by RPEO and shared with the BOE by Student & Staff Support.				
Summer School	March 2021 (was Nov. in 2019)					
Arrest and Citation Report	No update for 2021 (was July in 2020)	Note: Data related to arrests and citations will now be shared via other behavioral incidents reporting, due to the removal of SROs in the 20-21 school year.				
Enrollment	Nov. 2020 (was Nov. in 2019)					

Human Resources Report	Nov. 2020	
	(was Nov. in 2019)	
Climate Survey	No update	Note: Virtual Learning surveys and feedback report are
	(was June in 2019)	taking the place of Climate Survey for the 20-21 school year
High School Completion	March 2021	
	(was March in 2020)	
Postsecondary report	March 2021	
	(added in 2020)	
Annual Report / Strategic	September 2020	
Framework Metrics	(was Aug. in 2019)	
Pathways	December 2020	Note: Limited data availability for 19-20 school year
	(was not listed in 2019)	

Review cycles for materials sent to the Board of Education vary, but a typical review process for a report is as follows:

- I. Draft report completed by RPEO staff
- 2. Report shared with program leadership; feedback incorporated
- 3. Report shared with SLT and Superintendent; feedback incorporated
- 4. Report shared with Principals via Bulletin or meeting
- 5. Report shared with Board

Evaluation Cycles

Evaluation for Major Plans

Starting in 2015, the district began evaluating major plans on a cycle, which allows programs to use evaluation results to learn and improve, while also allowing the internal research office to focus on more robust annual reporting and research to support the implementation of the district's Strategic Framework. Through this work and feedback from leaders throughout the district, we have learned more about what worked well and where improvements can be made. We found that these evaluations can be informative, but they also require major investments of both money and staff time and do not always line up well with the timing of plan renewals. Based on this information, it is recommended that the initial evaluation happens after five years and all subsequent evaluations continue to occur on a five-year cycle, having all evaluations conducted by an external consultant, and have the Research & Program Evaluation Office focus on creating more robust annual monitoring updates. The five year cycles are represented in the table below.

Currently, MMSD has five major plans that fit within the major plan evaluation cycle: English Language Learner, Advanced Learner, Special Education, Behavior Education Plan, and Ignite (formerly the Information & Technology Plan). We recommend evaluating these plans every five years. The graphic below shows the recommended timeline of reports through the fall of 2025. We suggest this timeline for multiple reasons. First, summative evaluations are expensive, so we believe the district should invest in only one each year if possible. Second, we believe a cycle that focuses on only one

major summative evaluation a year allows for the greatest focus and highest quality decision-making. Finally, given that evaluations should inform plan updates, and plans often take a year or more to revise, an evaluation cycle that is less than five years means we would regularly be evaluating plans that had been in place for two to three years, barely enough time to overcome implementation dips and begin to see results. The graphic below shows the timing for evaluations through 2025. *Please note that this timeline could change based on Board feedback.*

As mentioned above, due to the district's response to COVID-19 and movement to virtual/distance learning in the third quarter of 19-20 and 20-21, there are major limitations to data availability. We recommend having 2020-21 be a monitoring year only for each of the major plans due to (1) lack of data availability and (2) to focus our efforts on monitoring and continuous improvement of MMSD's Virtual Learning and supports related to the COVID-19 pandemic. These monitoring reports will be available in Spring/Summer 2021. In addition, the major plans listed here will continue this year although the end date associated with the plan may have passed. The work of each of these plans continues and will continue to support students in these areas.

MAJOR PLAN	2020-2 I (Continue Current Plans)	FALL 2021	FALL 2022	FALL 2023	FALL 2024	FALL 2025	FALL 2026
Advanced Learner Plan	Monitoring	Monitoring	Evaluation Report	Updated Plan	Monitoring	Monitoring	Monitoring
ELL Plan	Monitoring	Updated Plan	Monitoring	Monitoring	Monitoring	Evaluation Report	Updated Plan
Special Education Plan	-	Evaluation Report	Updated Plan	Monitoring	Monitoring	Monitoring	Evaluation Report
Behavior Education Plan (Internal Evaluation)	Monitoring (quarterly)	Monitoring	Monitoring	Evaluation Report	Updated Plan	Monitoring	Monitoring
Ignite (Information & Technology Plan) (Internal Evaluation)	Monitoring	Monitoring	Evaluation Report	Updated Plan	Monitoring	Monitoring	Monitoring

Monitoring Year: Each program shares materials with the Board of Education, including progress and highlights from the prior year. These updates typically are shared by spring each year. We intend annual monitoring updates to be the main vehicle for continuous improvement of our major plans. These updates include a narrative from plan leaders about what they have done over the past year, what they have learned, and what they will do differently moving forward, including any planned adjustments to the plan. They also will include data on a set of key indicators that allow for formative reflection on success and challenges. Example indicators include suspension and behavior event totals for the Behavior Education Plan and advanced learner identification trends for the Advanced Learner Plan. The Research & Program Evaluation Office will produce more useful and informative versions of these annual monitoring updates than in previous years. We believe our best investment is in increasing the prominence of annual monitoring updates for each plan to allow both ourselves and the Board to be reflective, engage in robust continuous improvement, and make adjustments if concerns arise.

Evaluation Report: These reports will be produced five years after the last Evaluation Report. They focus on implementation and outcomes since the inception of the plan or last report and draws evaluative conclusions about progress and effectiveness. These reports typically will be shared near the beginning of the school year and will be produced by external consultants. By contracting this work out for the Advanced Learner Plan, English Language Learner Plan, and Special Education Plan, MMSD ensures a third party review while freeing up capacity for RPEO to work on the annual monitoring to drive continuous improvement.

Updated Plan: The major plans use the results of the summative evaluation completed the prior year, as well as lessons learned through regular monitoring and continuous improvement over the past five years, to update their plans. Because updated plans would be informed by the findings of each evaluation, these plans would take effect the year after the summative evaluation is presented. For example, a summative evaluation presented in the fall of 2025 would reflect data from the 2020-21 through 2024-25 school years and be used to inform an updated plan drafted during 2025-26 and taking effect for 2026-27.

Each of these resources focuses on the success of the plan, not of the student group referenced. For example, the ELL Plan evaluation focuses on whether the plan has been successful, not whether ELLs overall have succeeded in the district. We review the progress of specific student groups continually, with a special focus on end-of-year data, so we do not believe these evaluations should attempt to assess the success of both the plan and the student group. To keep the evaluations focused on the plans, we believe every major plan needs a clear set of goals and metrics included as part of the plan.

Evaluation for High Intensity Partnerships

Evaluations of high intensity partnerships are driven by Board Policy 7544 – School and Community Partnerships – which establishes a procedure for formalizing and monitoring partnerships between MMSD and community entities. High intensity partnerships are formalized through Board of Education approval of a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). Any substantive changes to program models during the MOA cycle are brought to the Board for review and approval. Per Board Policy 7544, high intensity partnerships are expected to be both monitored and reevaluated on a regular basis. In addition, given that all high intensity partnerships involve a higher investment of resources to carry out, we expect them to engage in an external evaluation on a regular cycle.

All high intensity partnerships undergo an annual monitoring process, which involves the partnership teams reviewing designated monitoring year outcomes and data (per the MOA). During a typical monitoring year, partnership teams review this information twice: (1) a mid-year meeting in quarter three, which covers first and second quarter outcomes and data, and (2) a meeting the first quarter of the following program year to review end-of-year outcomes and data. Partnership teams prepare an Annual Report of this information, highlights of which are shared with the Board of Education via the Weekly Update. These Annual Reports are used by partnership teams as a tool for continuous program improvement and to inform revision of the MOA when the partnership is due for renewal. This consistent analysis also enables partnerships to reaffirm their high intensity status, move to a lower intensity level, or sunset the partnership as appropriate.

At this time MMSD has ten high intensity partnerships. Unless otherwise stated in their MOA, high intensity partnerships are renewed on a three-year cycle. Going forward, high intensity partnerships will be shifting to a five-year

reevaluation and renewal cycle, unless there are other external factors that would impact this timeframe, such as federal grant timelines. In those instances, the partnership renewal cycle will coincide with the grant renewal schedule. There are two high intensity partnerships that currently fall into this category - Achievement Connections and Schools of Hope AmeriCorps (Elementary).

There are several reasons why the move to a five-year evaluation and renewal cycle is preferable. The first is that this would enable the renewal of high intensity partnerships to better align with the five major MMSD plans, which are all on a five year cycle. Secondly, a five-year evaluation cycle provides time for programs to draft new plans and prioritize implementing the program with fidelity, and allows resources (for example, financial assets and staff time) to be directed toward strengthening programs. It also provides the opportunity for innovation on the part of the program staff. In the intervening years between renewals, RPEO will continue to provide robust monitoring of critical data and outcomes. Finally, revisiting the current calendar provides MMSD with the opportunity to stagger these renewals. We will implement a three or five-year cycle for external evaluation that coincides with and supports MOA revision and renewal. Specific evaluation years are subject to change, pending resources available to fund evaluation efforts and alignment with grant and/or other evaluation expectations. Note that the PEOPLE and CBITS partnerships are already on five-year renewal cycles.

It is recommended that the change to a five-year cycle of review take immediate effect for the current high intensity partnerships rather than at their previously scheduled renewal date. Several factors direct this. The first is that RPEO is recommending that all evaluations and official monitoring reports be paused for the 2020-21 school year. This is due to the fact that the majority of the metrics associated with monitoring high intensity partnerships are not available from the 2019-2020 school year, causing monitoring reports to have major data limitations and therefore finite utility. In addition, the majority of the high intensity partnerships were reevaluated and renewed during the 2018-2019 school year (which is also the most recent year for which we have assessments, climate surveys, and other major data sources). RPEO will provide available data, which will be shared with program staff, partners, and the BOE. The Board has also received an update from each of the high intensity partnerships, outlining how they have changed and adapted their programming for the 2020-21 school year.

The following chart outlines the proposed revised timeline. The evaluation cycles for partnerships previously on a three-year renewal are noted with an asterisk, and the reevaluation and renewal cycles are shaded in teal. Orange indicates a monitoring year.

Proposed Revised Cycles of Review - High intensity Partnerships									
	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026	
AVID/TOPS/ College Club*	Evaluation & MOA Renewal	Monitoring	Maintain or Adjust Program	Monitoring	Monitoring	Evaluation & MOA Renewal	Monitoring	Monitoring	
Behavioral Health in Schools*	Evaluation & MOA Renewal	Monitoring	Maintain or Adjust Program	Monitoring	Monitoring	Evaluation & MOA Renewal	Monitoring	Monitoring	
CBITS*	Monitoring	Evaluation & MOA Renewal	Maintain or Adjust Program	Monitoring	Monitoring	Monitoring	Evaluation & MOA Renewal	Monitoring	

Early College STEM Academy - Phase 2	Monitoring	Monitoring	Maintain or Adjust Program	Monitoring	Evaluation & MOA Renewal	Monitoring	Monitoring	Monitoring
Forward Madison	Monitoring	Monitoring	Evaluation & MOA Renewal	Monitoring	Monitoring	Monitoring	Monitoring	Evaluation & MOA Renewal
Juventud and Escalera*	Evaluation & MOA Renewal	Monitoring	Maintain or Adjust Program	Monitoring	Monitoring	Evaluation & MOA Renewal	Monitoring	Monitoring
PEOPLE Program	Monitoring	Monitoring	Maintain or Adjust Program	Monitoring	Evaluation & MOA Renewal	Monitoring	Monitoring	Monitoring
Schools of Hope Middle School Program*	Evaluation & MOA Renewal	Monitoring	Maintain or Adjust Program	Monitoring	Monitoring	Evaluation & MOA Renewal	Monitoring	Monitoring
Youth Apprentice- ship	Monitoring	Monitoring	Partnership sunsets					

*High intensity partnerships previously on a three year external evaluation cycle

The following chart indicates the partnerships which are aligning their renewals with federal grant timelines. These two high intensity partnerships will be on a three-year renewal cycle.

	Three-year Grant Funded Programs									
	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026		
NEW Achievemen t Connections			First year as HIP	Monitoring	Evaluation & MOA Renewal	Monitoring	Monitoring	Evaluation & MOA Renewal		
Schools of Hope AmeriCorps - Elementary	Evaluation & MOA Renewal	Monitoring	Maintain or Adjust Program	Evaluation & MOA Renewal	Monitoring	Monitoring	Evaluation & MOA Renewal	Monitoring		

Scaling What Works

As a district, we want to sharpen our processes for piloting and determining what needs to be brought to scale and at what pace. By doing so, we ensure that new ideas address clear gaps or needs, determine metrics for success at the outset and discontinue what does not work. Most important, we ensure that ideas brought to scale are sustainable and supported by the community we serve. Coburn (2003) posits four dimensions of scaling: depth, sustainability, spread, and shifting ownership. Research like this, as well as our own experience, tells us that scaling is complex and goes beyond increasing participation; it involves the ways we spread ideas, as well as the ways we assess and sustain change as it reaches new levels.

In this document, we focus on district-level scaling decisions, outlining a process for how we will structure district-level conversations about what practices to pilot and how and when to bring them to scale. We anticipate scaling conversations to apply to district-level decisions in areas such as:

- Instructional resources (e.g. Ignite)
- Instructional designs (e.g., DLI)
- Programs (e.g., AVID/TOPS)

We want to emphasize that not all work done in the district has to fall into this process. Many of the things we do are projects or work streams that are not subject to this kind of review. We also recognize that many ideas originate in schools and in the community, and that many small-scale practices are in place that could be regarded as local pilots. These ideas are important and valuable, and serve to inform and create ideas that are then considered at the district level within step one of the process. They would not, however, be considered part of this scaling process at this point. Future iterations of this process will likely include discussions of how we generate ideas and determine whether to consider scaling them. For this first iteration, however, we have chosen to focus on district-level practices that are sponsored and brought forward by Senior Leadership Team members.

The Process for Piloting, Validating and Scaling

To aid this type of decision-making, we have outlined our process for piloting, validating and scaling. The process includes decisions relating to the ways we want to try or scale an idea, as well as those that assess whether that idea is working to help us decide whether to continue scaling up the idea. As we progress through the process, the standard for evidence we would want to see to move forward should increase.

The process includes the following steps:

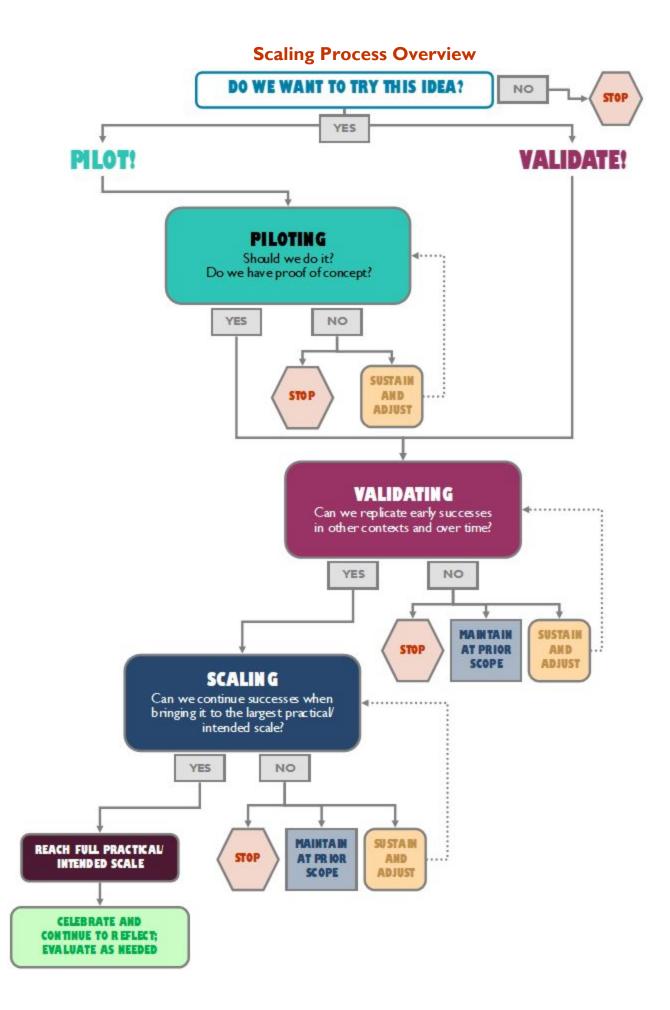
- Do we want to try this idea?
- Piloting
- Validating
- Scaling

Decision: Pilot, Validate, or Stop Decision: Should we continue? Yes or no Decision: Should we continue? Yes or no Decision: Should we continue? Yes or no

As a follow-up to the decision not to continue, there are three possible options: adjusting the idea and restarting the current step with a different approach, maintaining the idea at its current level of implementation, or stopping the idea entirely.

We acknowledge that some district-level practices are underway that may already be at different steps in this process. For existing ideas and practices, we will do our best to identify where within this process they currently lie, but we know the fit may be imperfect. We also recognize that the process outlined here focuses on actions taken by Central Office leaders, the Senior Leadership Team, and the Board of Education. The voices of school staff, students, families, and community members should be integrated by those parties into the decisions we make at each step. That work is not outlined explicitly here, but is critical to making this process meaningful.

On the next page, we present an overview of the scaling process that shows how we intend to move across the steps. Subsequent pages provide more detail about what we believe happens within each step.



Do we want to try this idea?

The purpose of this step is to determine whether/how to try an idea. In this step, Central Office program leaders and Senior Leadership Team should answer the following questions:

- What will we do?
- Why will we do it? Does it fill a clear gap or need? Will it enhance equity?
- Why do we think it will work? Does local experience or research suggest it will work?
- Do we have stakeholder support and excitement?
- What will it cost to try it? Think about money, resources, and time, both initially and at broader scale.

If the answers to most questions above are positive, leaders can recommend moving forward with this idea.

Program leadership and Senior Leadership Team then recommend how to try this idea. Options include:

- We **pilot** ideas when they are **promising practices** (e.g., have strong theory or promise, but we feel we would need to learn more locally to be confident it would work for us)
- We validate ideas when they are a *best practice* (e.g., we are confident it will work based on evidence and the practice is best to put in place at a larger scale right away)

If we determine it is an *emerging practice* (e.g., some evidence exists, but we are not completely sure), we choose pilot or validate based on our confidence in the idea.

If we will **PILOT**, then move to the piloting step. If we will **VALIDATE**, then skip the piloting step and go straight to validating.

Piloting

At the start of this step, we focus on a couple of key questions:

- Where should this pilot take place?
- How will we know if it works? What are our metrics for success?
- When will we check in on results?

Then, we try the idea at a small scale.

Once we reach the time when we agreed we would check in on results, we reflect on the pilot to determine whether we should continue to scale this idea. In this step, we are asking whether we have achieved proof of concept (e.g., evidence that demonstrates a design is feasible and has practical potential). We ask questions like:

- How did we implement it?
- Did it show results that indicate it might work? Did we reach our metrics for success?
- Do we believe it can work if we continue to expand?
- Can we afford to do this? Think about financial resources, time, and opportunity costs.

Program leadership work with the Research & Program Evaluation Office as needed to determine the evidence and findings for each question. This evidence is then presented to the Senior Leadership Team. At the piloting stage, although we want to see positive results to continue, we might be satisfied with stories or perceptions of why the idea shows promise, as opposed to quantifiable outcomes that approach causality.

If there is sufficient evidence to determine proof of concept and potential for this idea to work at a greater scale,

leadership and the Board would determine yes, this idea can be scaled further. If not, we would either choose to sustain and adjust the idea, which means we would try the pilot again using a different approach, or discontinue the idea.

Validating

The purpose of this step is to determine how we will spread this idea. In this step, Central Office program leaders and Senior Leadership Team answer questions such as:

- What conditions helped the pilot succeed?
- Where else do those conditions exist already? Where do we want to create them?
- Do we have stakeholder support and excitement?
- What evidence will we need to show success in validation? What are our metrics for success?
- When will we check in on results?

The answers to these questions, as well as the type of idea we are implementing, help program leadership decide key elements of expansion, including whether it will be immediate or phased, voluntary or required, across some students and schools or across all, and whether implementation plans are centralized or localized.

Then, we try the idea at an expanded scale.

Once we reach the time when we agreed we would check in on results, we review what we've learned to see if we can replicate success in additional contexts and over time. We ask questions like:

- How did we do it?
- Is it working? Have we achieved our metrics for success?
- Who is it working for? Does it enhance equity? Has it filled a clear gap or need?
- Have the benefits justified the costs?
- Based on the evidence we see, how broad should this idea's eventual reach be?

Program leadership work with the Research & Program Evaluation Office and/or external evaluators as needed to determine the evidence and findings for each question. At this point, the evidence required to validate spread is more rigorous than at the pilot phase, and may include data collected and analyzed in more rigorous ways. This evidence is then presented to the Senior Leadership Team and Board of Education.

If there is sufficient evidence to determine and validate expansion and potential for this idea to work at a greater scale, leadership and the Board would determine yes, this idea can be scaled further. If not, program leadership would determine whether to continue implementing at the prior scale, to adjust the plan for expansion and reevaluate, or to discontinue.

Scaling

The purpose of this step is to determine how we will take this idea to full scale. In this step, Central Office program leaders and Senior Leadership Team should answer questions such as:

- Who is it working for?
- What conditions helped validation succeed?
- Where else do those conditions exist already? Where do we want to create them?
- Can we afford to do this? Think about financial resources, time, and opportunity costs.
- Do we have stakeholder support and excitement?
- What does full scale look like? How far can and/or should this idea spread?

- What evidence will we need to show success at or near full scale?
- When will we check in on results?

The answers to these questions help program leadership decide key elements of expansion, including whether implementation is consistent across schools or school-specific, and whether the idea will extend to all students or some students.

Then, we try the idea at or near its fullest scale.

Once we reach the time when we agreed we would check in on results, we review what we have learned about implementing at scale. We ask questions like:

- How did we do it?
- Is it working? Have we achieved our metrics for success?
- Who is it working for? Does it enhance equity? Has it filled a clear gap or need?
- Have the benefits justified the costs?
- Can positive results be sustained?
- Does our community support it at full scale?
- Are we ready to transfer ownership away from central office leaders and into schools?

Program leadership work with the Research & Program Evaluation Office and/or external evaluators to determine the evidence and findings for each question. At this point, the evidence required to determine success at full scale should be rigorous; this step should have the highest bar of proof among all steps in the process. This evidence is then presented to the Senior Leadership Team and Board of Education.

If there is sufficient evidence to determine success at full scale, leadership and the Board would determine yes, this idea can become standard practice at full scale. If not, the idea would be paused and program leadership would determine whether to continue implementing at the prior scale, to adjust the plan for scaling and reevaluate, or to discontinue.

After an idea reaches full scale, it becomes part of our district's regular routines and practices. We reflect, monitor, and adjust our ways of working on a regular basis as we go through the continuous improvement processes described earlier in this document. Data updates, research reports, and program evaluations are among the types of review we may use as part of continuous improvement.