

Preface

AUDIENCE FOR THIS BOOK

As expectations and accountability for student learning and performance have risen over the last decade, a new educational role has evolved: the school improvement specialist (SIS). This book is intended to support people who facilitate improvement and transformation in schools or aspire to do so.

The SIS may be a person assigned from a government agency; a consultant hired to support a school, school district, or local education agency; an education administrator employed at the school or district level; or an instructional coach or teacher focused on systemic school improvement. Regardless of how the SIS came into this new role, his or her goal is to improve organizational processes and the performance of the adults who work in the organization to improve student achievement.

Often, an SIS is a former principal, school superintendent, or other education leader who may have been effective as an administrator, teacher leader, or counselor but who has little-to-no experience acting in a consultative or adult performance coaching role without direct authority over people or the organization. Typically, SIS will have to make many adjustments and acquire new skills to influence sustainable results, especially if they are expected to operate without direct authority over school staff.

Until the International Society for Performance Improvement (ISPI) codified the role of the SIS through the research of Page and Hale (International Society for Performance Improvement, 2012), the set of skills for this role was not standardized or documented. Anyone who could print a business card could claim to be a school improvement consultant or specialist. Using the outputs of the study conducted by Page and Hale in April 2010 the ISPI launched a new, fully evidence-based job certification for individuals who facilitate systemic school improvement—the Certified School Improvement Specialists (CSIS). The school improvement certification standards are also rooted in the

ten human performance technology (HPT) standards, developed and refined by the ISPI over the last ten years. The HPT standards reflect the work of accomplished practitioners in both the private and public sectors of performance improvement.

Janie Fields is a CSIS who made the transition from the role of principal, leading a school, to the role of performance consultant, assigned to help other schools improve their performance.

In my role as a principal, I led the turnaround of a low-performing school—a five-year process—[by] working with the faculty, staff and other administrators. When I was faced with the challenge of facilitating the improvement of schools where I was not the leader, I was not confident in my abilities. I had never been trained or prepared for the new role as a consultant. The organization I was working for, the Georgia Leadership Institute for School Improvement, brought in Dr. Judy Hale, who worked with us on understanding the role of a performance consultant and the methods for facilitation of improvement that is sustainable. At the time, I felt totally overwhelmed. As I did the work and followed what she taught, I began to see that there was a process for my work that would get the right results for those I was assigned to support. I am now an independent performance consultant, and I guide the schools and school districts who are my clients to improve their processes and performance so that student achievement improves and is sustainable. Every day, I use the tools that I now know are rooted in the field of Human Performance Technology and I apply the Certified School Improvement Specialist standards, the guideposts of my consulting work. I am proud to be a Certified School Improvement Specialist with evidence that I am proficient in the work my clients hire me to perform, and I am grateful that I now have access to a professional network of others who do the same work I do, around the country and around the world.

When I participated in one of the focus groups that provided the information that resulted in the Certified School Improvement Specialist standards, I was pleased and proud to recognize that those of us who had been successful in facilitating school improvement were following similar processes, although we had adopted them independently. I was one of the only people in the group who had any formal training in facilitating improvement. That day, those of us in the group came to realize that we have a unique and valuable profession, with a

methodology that, when applied with fidelity, can facilitate others to produce sustainable improvement results. (J. Fields, CSIS, personal communication, August 12, 2011)

The School Improvement Specialist Field Guide describes the skills and knowledge required of effective school improvement professionals. It provides school improvement practitioners with examples, tools, and guidance they can use to develop their craft and reflect on their practice. This book will also help experienced practitioners prepare their applications for the CSIS certification.



Additional materials and resources related to
The School Improvement Specialist Field Guide
can be found on the companion website.
<http://www.corwin.com/sisguide>