Michigan Evaluation Brief

How are Districts Using the District Capacity Assessment?

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The document provides a summary of how Michigan Districts used the District Capacity Assessment (DCA) during 2018-19.

Introduction

Michigan's MTSS (MiMTSS) Technical Assistance Center works on behalf of the Michigan Department of Education to provide a continuum of technical assistance to ISDs, districts, and schools. The mission is to improve outcomes for all learners by assisting educators in developing infrastructures to support high-quality and sustained implementation of effective, data-driven practices within a Multi-Tiered System of Supports framework.

The MiMTSS TA Center achieves this in part by providing professional learning and technical assistance to educators. District Implementation Teams (DIT) engage in professional learning while setting up MTSS data, systems, and practices. DITs need a way to determine the degree to which district infrastructure components are in place in order to support and sustain implementation of MTSS in their schools. As such, DITs assess their systems using the District Capacity Assessment (DCA), which identifies the core features of a sustainable system of support (Ward et al., 2015).

The DCA was developed by MiMTSS and the State Implementation and Scaling-up of Evidence-based Practices (SISEP) in 2015 in response to the absence of other existing capacity measures that could be used to help Districts evaluate, measure progress, and design improvement plans around a multi-tiered system of supports (Russell et al., 2015). The primary purpose of the DCA is to assist districts in implementing effective innovations that benefit students. The capacity of a district to facilitate building-level implementation refers to the systems, activities, and resources that are necessary for schools to successfully adopt and sustain Effective Innovations.

To understand how Michigan Districts are using the DCA, this evaluation brief aims to answer the following research questions:

1. How often do partnering Districts complete the DCA per year?
2. What are the average scores for each Driver of the DCA?
3. What subscales and items on the DCA have the highest and lowest scores?

Methodology

For this evaluation brief, the sample consists of 106 Districts that assessed at least one Implementation Driver of the DCA during the 2018-19 school year. Schools must have completed at least one item in an Implementation Driver to have that Driver assessment included in the analyses. For research questions 3 and 4, if Districts completed the DCA more than one time during the year, we used the assessment with the highest Total Score in the analysis

District Characteristics

District demographic information was gathered from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) for the 2018-19 District year. Of the 106 districts, 104 had reported data, and there were on average, 1806 students, 102 teachers, 4.82 schools, and 18 students per teacher across each district. Further, 44 (42%) were located in rural areas, 30 (29%) were located in suburban areas, 17 (16%) were located in towns, and 13 (13%) were located in cities.
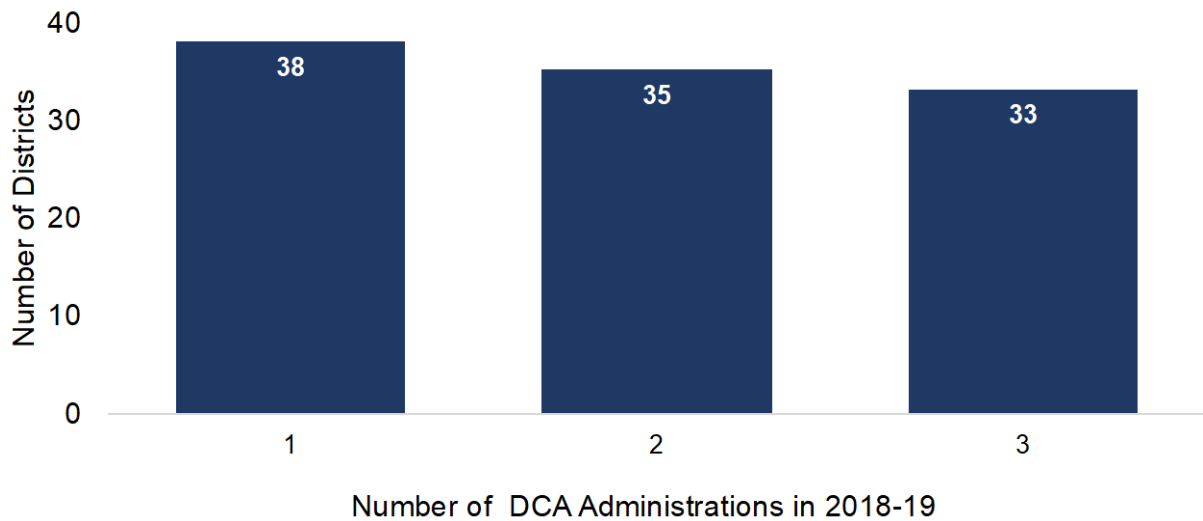
Results

1. How often do Districts complete the DCA per year?

The 106 partnering Districts completed 90 DCA surveys during the 2018-19 District year. As shown in figure 1, a total of 38 (36%) of the Districts completed the DCA once, and 35 (33%) completed the DCA twice, 33 (31%) completed the DCA three times.

Figure 1. Majority of Michigan Districts Administer the DCA Once on an Annual Basis

2. What are the average scores for each Driver of the DCA?

Results are shown in figure 2. Of the 106 Districts that completed the DCA at some time during the school year, the average score on the Total scale was 68% (SD = 24 percentage points), the average score on the Leadership Driver was 72% (SD = 25 percentage points), and the average score on the Competency Driver was 78% (SD = 26 percentage points), and the average score on the Organization Driver was 53% (SD = 26 percentage points).

Figure 2. Median DCA Scores show the Leadership and Competency Driver were the Highest and the Organization Driver was the Lowest Across Districts
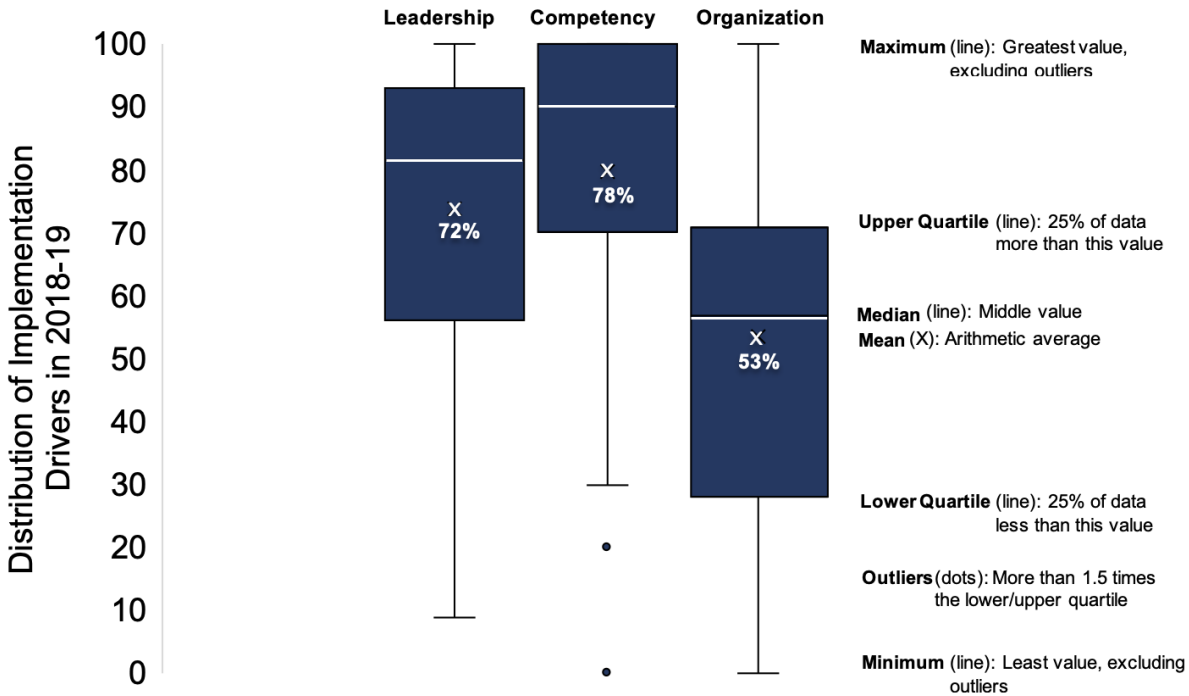

3. What subscales and items on the DCA have the highest and lowest scores?

Leadership Driver

As shown in figure 3, the average score for the 106 Districts completing the Leadership Driver was 72% (SD = 25 percentage points). Mean scores for individual items on this subscale ranged from 1.89 for *District allocates resources to support the use of the selected EI* and 1.33 for *DIT continuously improves the use of the implementation plans.* The Leadership Driver has no subscales to report.

Figure 3. Average Leadership Scores Based on District's Highest DCA Total Score Show that the Driver did not Meet the 80% Scale Capacity Threshold
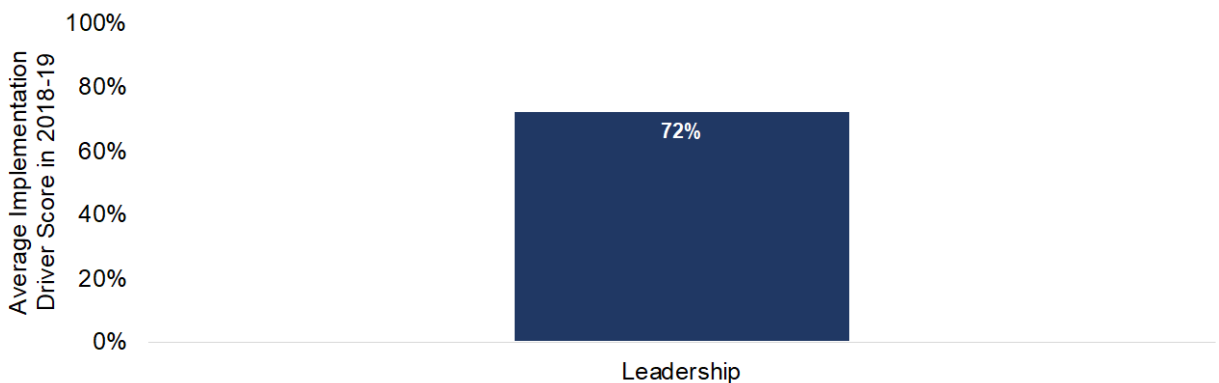
Competency Driver

The average score for the Competency Driver was 78% (SD = 26 percentage points). Mean scores for individual items on this subscale ranged from 1.75 for *DIT supports schools in the use of a fidelity measure for EI Implementation to 0.59 for DIT uses coaching effectiveness data.* The Competency Driver subscales are reported below.

Fidelity

The average score for the Fidelity subscale was 1.75 for *DIT supports schools in the use of a fidelity measure for EI Implementation.*

Selection

The average score for the Selection subscale was 1.23. Mean scores for individual items on this subscale ranged from 1.25 for *District has a plan to continuously strengthen staff skills to 1.20 for District uses a process for selecting staff (internal and/or external) who will use EIs.*

Training

The average score for the Training subscale was 1.19. Mean scores for individual items on this subscale ranged from 1.50 for *DIT secures training on the EI for all district/school personnel and stakeholders to 0.89 for DIT uses training effectiveness data.*

Coaching

The average score for the Coaching subscale was 0.87. Mean scores for individual items on this subscale ranged from 1.15 for *District has a coaching system to support schools in their use of EIs to 0.59 for DIT uses coaching effectiveness data.*

Figure 4. Average Competency Subscale Scores Based on District's Highest DCA Total Score Show Fidelity as the Highest and Coaching as the Lowest
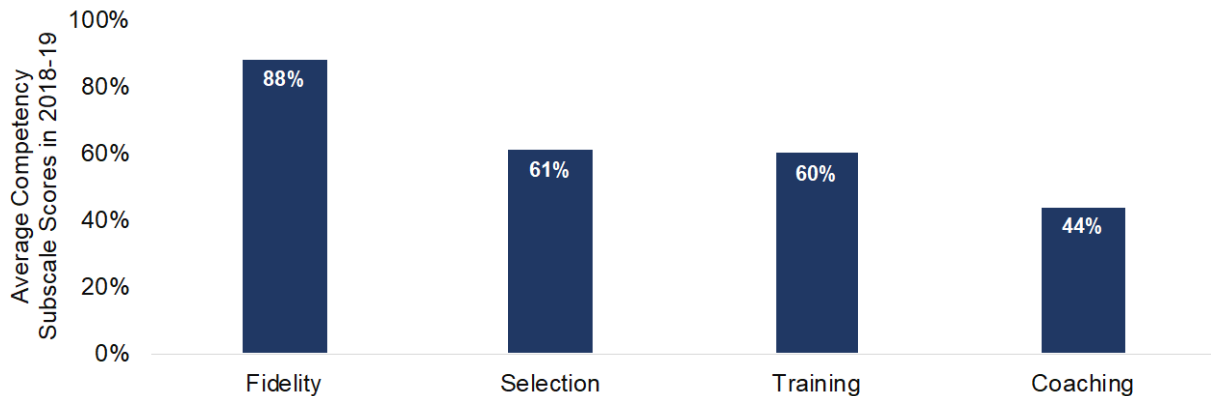
Organization Driver

The average score for the Organization Driver was 53% (SD = 26 percentage points). Mean scores for individual items on this subscale ranged from 1.55 for *DIT uses an effective team meeting process* to 0.87 for *District has a written process to align EIs.* The Organization Driver subscales are reported below.

Decision Support Data Systems

The average score for the Data System subscale was 0.87. Mean scores for individual items on this subscale ranged from 1.74 for *DIT has access to data for the EI to 1.32 for DIT has a process for using data for decision making.*

Facilitative Administration

The average score for the Administration subscale was 1.24. Mean scores for individual items on this subscale ranged from 1.55 for *DIT uses an effective team meeting process to 0.87 for District has a written process to align EIs.*

Systems Intervention

The average score for the Intervention subscale was 0.53 for *District uses a process to report policy relevant information to outside entities.*

Figure 5. Average Organization Subscale Scores Based on District's Highest DCA Total Score Show Data System as the Highest and Intervention as the Lowest
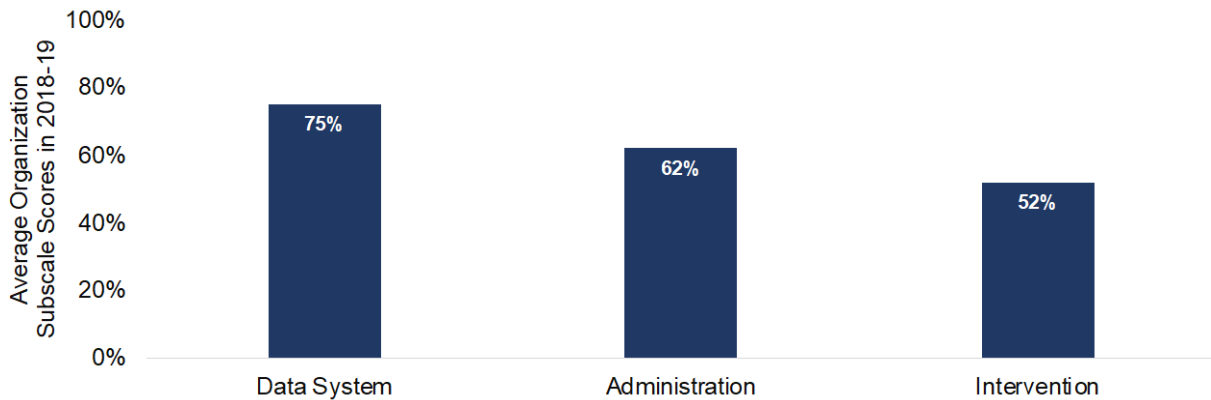

Table 1. Average Scores Across Items Within the Implementation Drivers and Subscales

Driver: Subscale	Item	Item Description	Score Average
Leadership	1	There is a District Implementation Team (DIT) to support implementation of Effective Innovations (EI)	1.77
Leadership	2	DIT includes an individual with executive leadership authority	1.82
Leadership	3	DIT includes a designated coordinator(s)	1.67
Leadership	7	District allocates resources to support the use of the selected EI	1.89
Leadership	8	DIT has an implementation plan for the EI	1.49
Leadership	9	DIT continuously improves the use of the implementation plans	1.33
Leadership	18	DIT supports the composition of BITs	1.68
Leadership	19	DITs support the development of BIT implementation plans for the EI	1.53

Driver: Subscale	Item	Item Description	Score Average
Competency: Fidelity	13	DIT supports schools in the use of a fidelity measure for EI Implementation	1.75
Competency: Selection	21	District uses a process for selecting staff (internal and/or external) who will use EIs	1.20
Competency: Selection	22	District has a plan to continuously strengthen staff skills	1.25
Competency: Training	23	DIT secures training on the EI for all district/school personnel and stakeholders	1.50
Competency: Training	24	DIT uses training effectiveness data	0.89
Competency: Coaching	25	District has a coaching system to support schools in their use of EIs	1.15
Competency: Coaching	26	DIT uses a coaching service delivery plan to support building implementation teams	0.88
Competency: Coaching	27	DIT uses coaching effectiveness data	0.59
Organization: Data System	14	DIT has access to data for the EI	1.74
Organization: Data System	15	DIT actively uses different types of data	1.49
Organization: Data System	16	DIT has a process for using data for decision making	1.32
Organization: Data System	20	DIT supports BITs in using data for decision making	1.48
Organization: Administration	4	DIT uses an effective team meeting process	1.55
Organization: Administration	5	District has written process for selecting EIs	1.10
Organization: Administration	6	District has a written process to align EIs	0.87
Organization: Administration	10	District uses a communication plan	1.14
Organization: Administration	11	District uses a process for addressing internal barriers	1.38
Organization: Administration	17	District provides a status report on the EI to the school board	1.41

Driver: Subscale	Item	Item Description	Score Average
Organization: Intervention	12	District uses a process to report policy relevant information to outside entities	1.05

Discussion

The measurement of capacity helps to demonstrate the impact of professional learning and provides context for interpreting district data. Districts that participate in professional learning for MTSS and commit to implementation should be using a capacity measure, such as the DCA, to monitor implementation and make improvements, minimally twice per school year. This evaluation brief can be used by educators across the educational cascade:

Districts

Districts can use these results to understand how their DCA administration schedule and scores compare to other Districts in the state. If Districts are just getting started with MTSS, they can use the evaluation results to anticipate upcoming challenges they may need to plan for to support implementation. Districts may seek to learn from and collaborate with other districts in their area with successful implementation. Districts that are performing better than statewide patterns should celebrate their accomplishments and consider how they will sustain their implementation. They may choose to share their successes and examples within their district, region, or with state leaders so that others can benefit from their learning.

Intermediate School Districts

Intermediate School Districts can use these results to understand how Districts in their area compare to other Districts in the state. They can use the results to predict the implementation supports that Districts will need as they work to implement and sustain MTSS. ISDs may seek to learn from Districts in their area with successful implementation and then share resources across the region. ISDs may reach out to the MiMTSS TA Center and the Michigan Department of Education to request supports in areas of MTSS implementation that their local Districts are struggling to fully implement. If ISDs are providing their own MTSS professional learning to Districts, they can use these statewide data to design professional learning materials that will address common needs that we see in Michigan Districts.

MiMTSS TA Center and Michigan Department of Education

The MiMTSS TA Center analyzes these data to inform the technical assistance they provide to districts. Data from this report suggest that Districts may need more intensive and sustained supports to fully implement a district infrastructure. Subscale and item analysis help to identify the specific concepts in need of more support. Items with low average scores from this report are used to inform updates to the District Installation Training content accessed by District Implementation Teams, as well as coaching supports provided to Intensive Technical Assistance partners.

The MiMTSS TA Center also reports statewide district capacity data (i.e., this evaluation brief) to the Michigan Department of Education and other funding agencies to demonstrate the impact

of the TA Center's supports to the field, to identify shared priorities, and to work together to address any potential barriers to improving MTSS implementation capacity.

References

Russell, C., Ward, c., Harms, A., St. Martin, K., Cusumano, D., Fixsen, D., Levy, R., & LeVesseur, C. (2015). District Capacity Assessment Technical Manual. National Implementation Research Network, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Ward, C., St. Martin, K., Horner, R., Duda, M., Ingram-West, K., Tedesco, M., Putnam, D., Buenrostro, M., & Chaparro, E. (2015). District Capacity Assessment. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

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