

CEI Instructional Rounds Initiative 2017-2018



CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL INNOVATION

Preliminary Highlights from the Evaluation

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About Instructional Rounds

Instructional Rounds is a professional inquiry process focused on school improvement at scale.

It is a 4-step process (*Problem of Practice, Observation of Practice, Observation Debrief, Next Level of Work*) aimed at improving instructional outcomes for all children across all classrooms within a school or district.

CEI’s use of Instructional Rounds began as a component of the Partnership for Innovation and Collaboration for Charter Schools (PICCS) Initiative. A pilot was conducted in the 2013-14 school year with six independent charter schools forming a cross-schools network. The initiative evolved and grew over the following four school years.

“It is like throwing a pebble that creates change.”
—Participant¹

¹ Participant comments in text boxes came from focus group and individual interviews with participants.





About the Evaluation

Measurement Incorporated, an independent research and assessment firm, has conducted evaluations of the PICCS initiative for CEI every year since it began in 2008. The evaluation of the 2017-18 Instructional Rounds Initiative has focused on the implementation of IR this school year and its impact on participants, schools and the two networks. Mixed methods were used in the evaluation including observation of rounds, focus groups and individual interviews with participants, site visits to schools that showed in-depth use of IR methods, and an end-of-year online survey with all participants.

During the 2017-2018 school year, CEI expanded the IR Initiative by supporting two public schools networks in New York City.

Network I was comprised of five independent charter schools. Network II was comprised of eight NYC Department of Education schools. Four schools in each network served as host schools for rounds in their respective network.

Findings

Participants' Description of Their Experience

After the third set of rounds, participants interviewed were asked to provide three adjectives that described their current feelings about their participation in Instructional Rounds. Many of those interviewed found it challenging to sum up their experience in just three words. The adjectives are graphically depicted in the word cloud that appears in Figure 1.

Figure 1
Three Adjectives that describe your current feelings about your participation in IR



The adjective most often mentioned was valuable², used by four interviewees. Useful, helpful and essential were also named. Other adjectives struck a related theme, indicating that participation was informative (two), enlightening (two), educational, eye-opening, expansive and insightful. Two interviewees described their participation as purposeful. Hopeful, optimistic, enthusiastic and excited were each mentioned once. Interested, thoughtful and reflective were also used to describe participant feelings. Two used the adjective exhausting, and one each said tired or draining; another said frustrating. Other words named once were validating, multi-layered, and willing. These varied and nuanced responses indicate that participants derived a variety of benefits as both network participants and educators.

Participants' Skill Gains

As seen in Figure 2, participants assessed their ability level in a variety of areas before and after their participation via an online survey³. Before participating, between half and three quarters said they had no or only some ability in all skill areas measured. After participating, virtually everyone (97-100%) said they had moderate or a great deal of ability in all areas. Specifically, over half said that they had a great deal of ability in all areas (58-71%).

"If you are a teacher and you go into several classrooms all the time, with frequency, all of the sudden...it is very self-reflective for you...And you are getting super-trained on what is a DOK (Depth of Knowledge) level. And then all of the sudden, you infuse it into your own practice and you are flying."

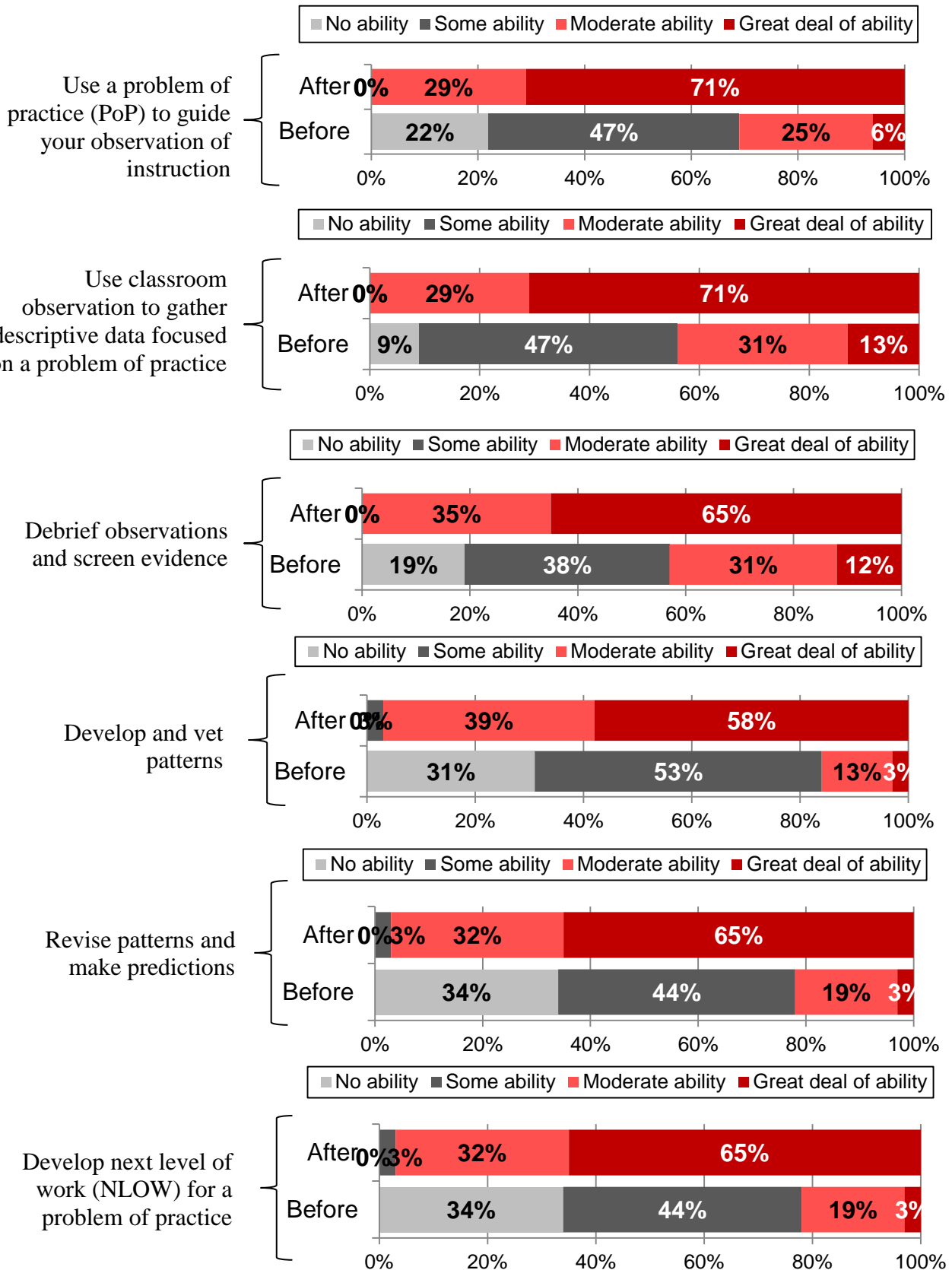
-Participant

² Some responses were paraphrased or shortened to be one word.

³ Several items were adapted from *Instructional Rounds Survey for District and Network-Level Leaders-Revised*, developed by Thomas Fowler-Finn, Instructional Rounds Plus website; Susan Frankel, RMC Research; and Adam Tanney, RMC Research, with permission from the author.

Figure 2
Participants' Skill Level Before and After Participation in IR

What ability did you have to...



Self-reported skill gains were statistically significant ($p < .000$) in all areas measured. In addition, a composite score was created averaging participant gains across all areas measured. These gains were significant as well ($p < .000$). Skill gains were also examined by cohort and found to be similar among the two groups and significant for both ($p < .000$). Since skill acquisition is at the heart of internalizing IR, this clearly demonstrates that participants perceived that their skill level greatly increased.

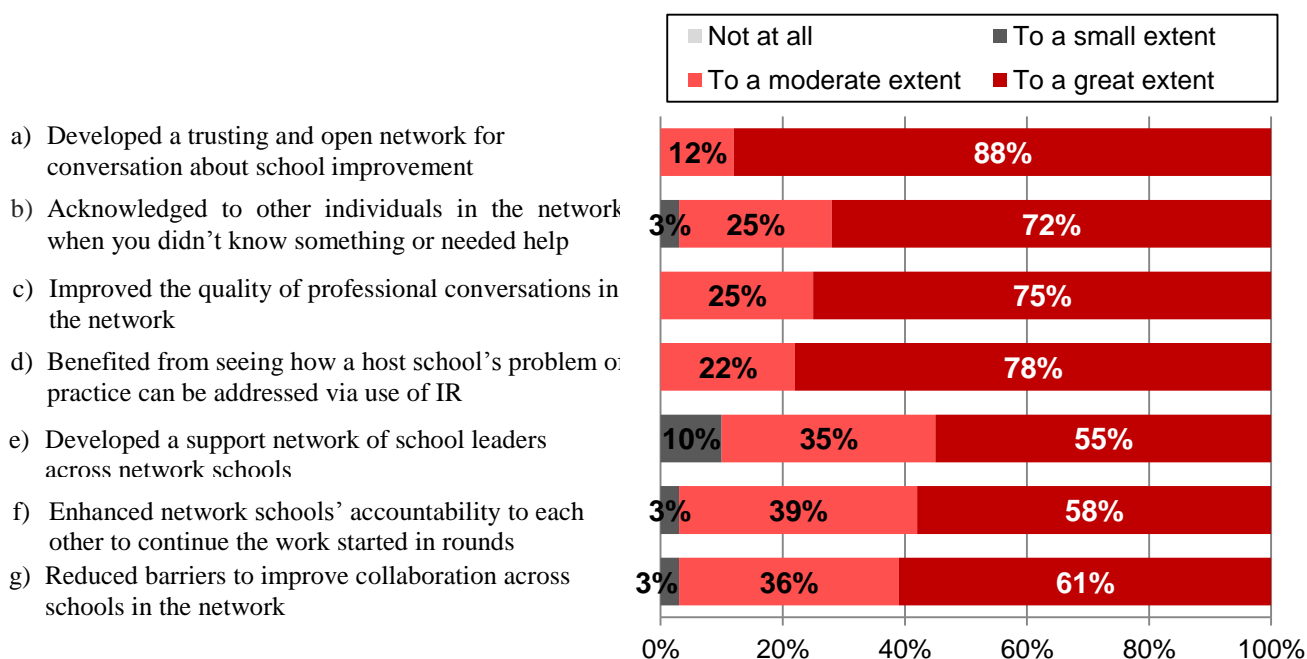
Outcomes

Participants were also asked to what extent they had the opportunity to observe other teachers in their school and in other schools before and after their participation. Although two-thirds reported that they had opportunities (to a moderate or great extent) in their school, only 16% had the same level of opportunity to observe other teachers at other schools *prior* to their participation. In contrast, *after* their participation, 88% indicated they had opportunities (to a moderate or great extent) to observe other teachers in their school and 81% in other schools. This represented a 65% higher percent reporting that they had opportunities to observe teachers in other schools after IR.

“There is a little bit of IR that is fireproofing instead of firefighting. And learning to do that through the classroom observation process has really taken my work and my ability to do my work to the next level.”
–Participant

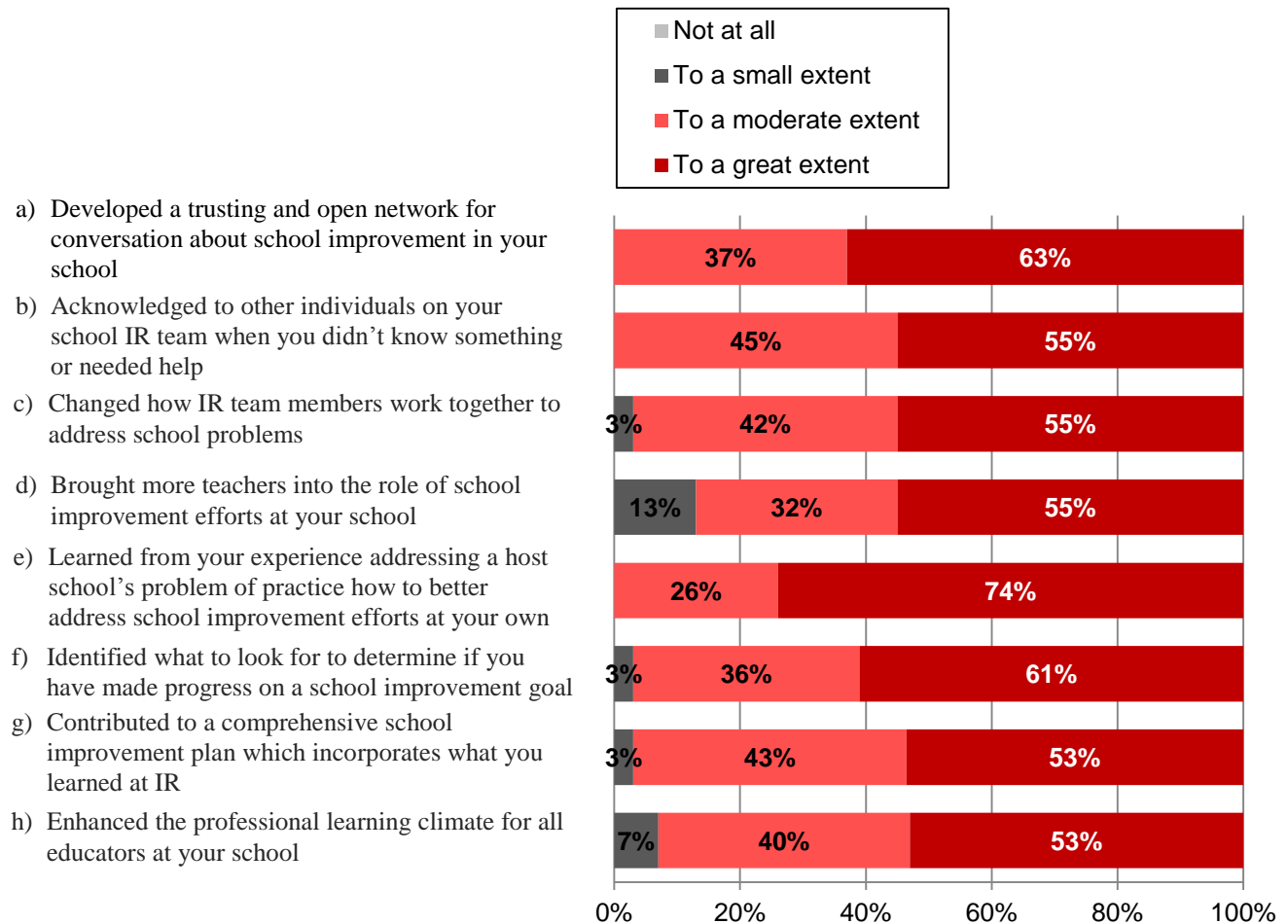
Figures 3-5 explore the perceived impact of IR on the participant’s network, school team, and self. Figure 3 explores whether participants have experienced a variety of outcomes in their network.

Figure 3
Extent to Which Outcomes Were Experienced in Your IR Network



As shown in Figure 3, almost 90% indicated that they developed a trusting and open network for conversation about school improvement to a great extent. Three-quarters or more indicated that they benefitted from seeing how a host school’s problem of practice can be addressed via use of IR and that the quality of professional conversations in the network had improved to a great extent.

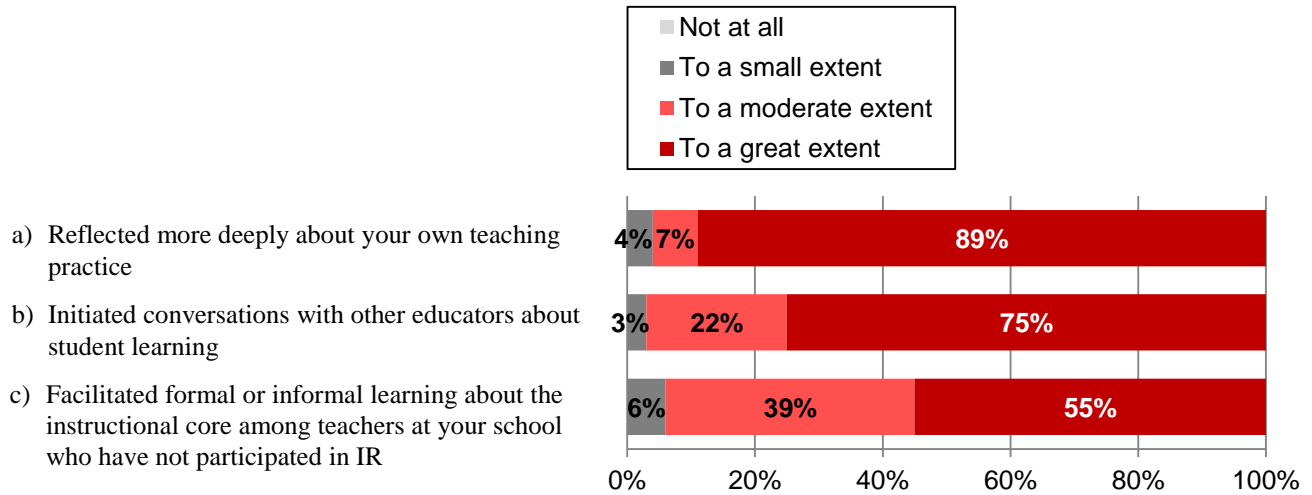
Figure 4
Extent to Which Outcomes Were Experienced in your School IR Team



Over 50% reported that they had experienced all outcomes in their school team to a great extent. Of note, almost three-quarters indicated that they learned from their experience addressing a host school’s problem of practice how to better address school improvement.

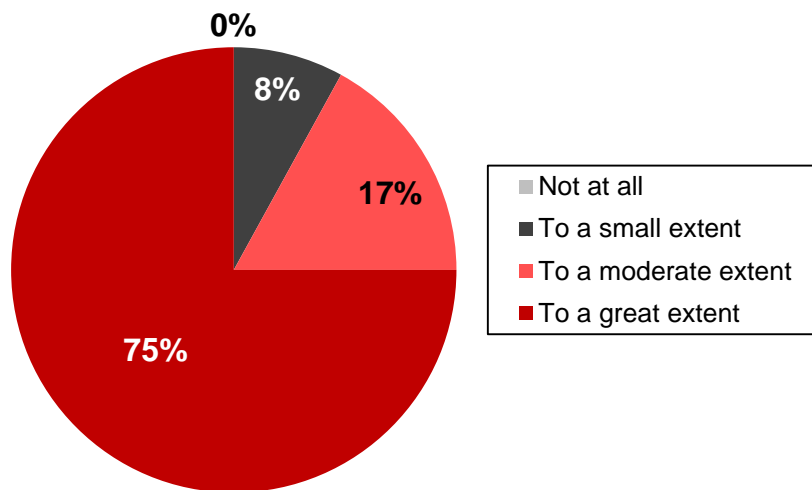
“When the trainer did that whole presentation about feedback, it kind of just reminds you that there is so much that students are telling us and...that maybe we don't always listen to what they are telling us.”
–Participant

Figure 5
Extent to Which Outcomes Were Experienced *in Yourself*



Remarkably, almost 90% of participants who answered this question reported that their participation caused them to reflect more deeply about their own teaching practice to a great extent. Three-quarters said that they had initiated conversations with other educators about student learning to a great extent. Over half (55%) of those who answered this question said that they had facilitated formal or informal learning about the instructional core among teachers at their school who had not participated in IR to a great extent. This indicates that IR practices are being infused into participating schools.

Figure 6
Extent to Which Observing Other Teachers has Influenced Your Classroom Teaching
N=24

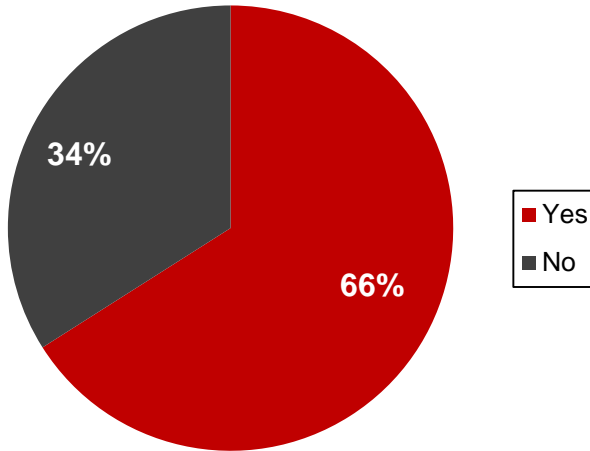


As seen in Figure 6, three-quarters of those who answered the question said that observing other teachers influenced their classroom teaching to a great extent. The rest said that it influenced their teaching to a moderate (17%) or small (8%) extent.

Host school experience

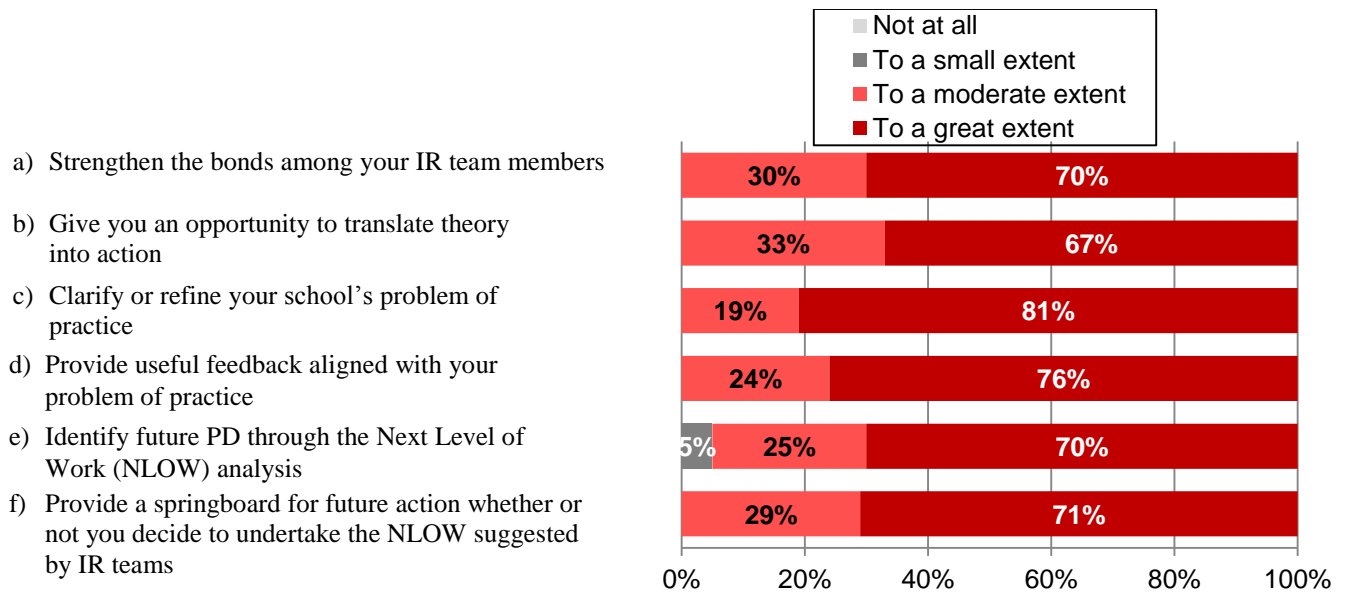
Two-thirds of participants (n=21) surveyed came from host schools.

**Figure 7
Host School Status**



They were asked about the impact of being host school participants. At least two-thirds of respondents indicated that they experienced each outcome measured to a great extent. Not surprisingly, 81% indicated that their participation clarified or refined their school problem of practice to a great extent and 76% said that the experience provided useful feedback aligned with their problem of practice to a great extent.

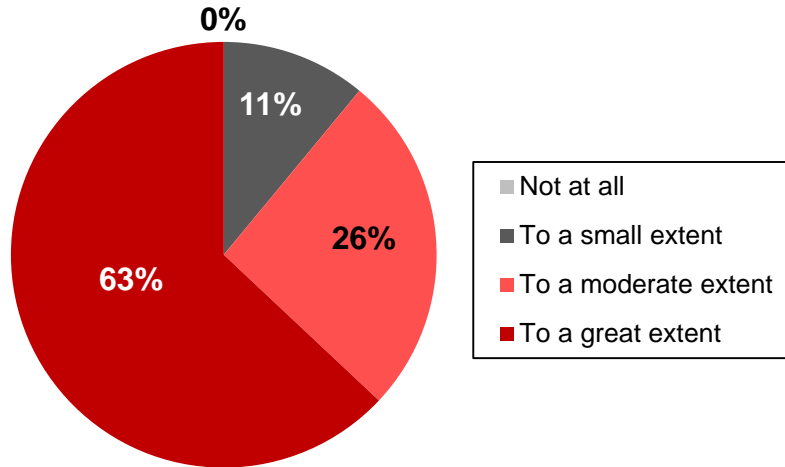
**Figure 8
Impact of Being a Host School Participant
N=21**



Host school participants' survey responses were compared with everyone else. While their skills gains were comparable, they did report a significantly higher extent of outcomes on their school IR team and on themselves. This suggests that being a host school staff member enhanced the impact of participation.

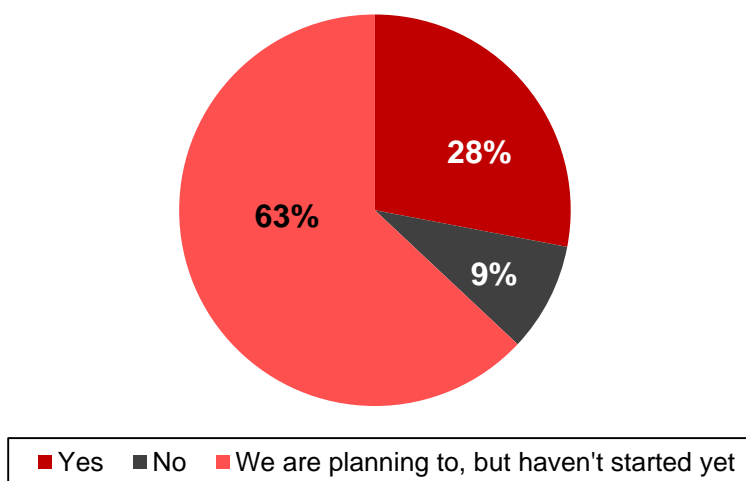
Future Plans

Figure 9
Use of NLOW for Planning Future PD and Work
N=21



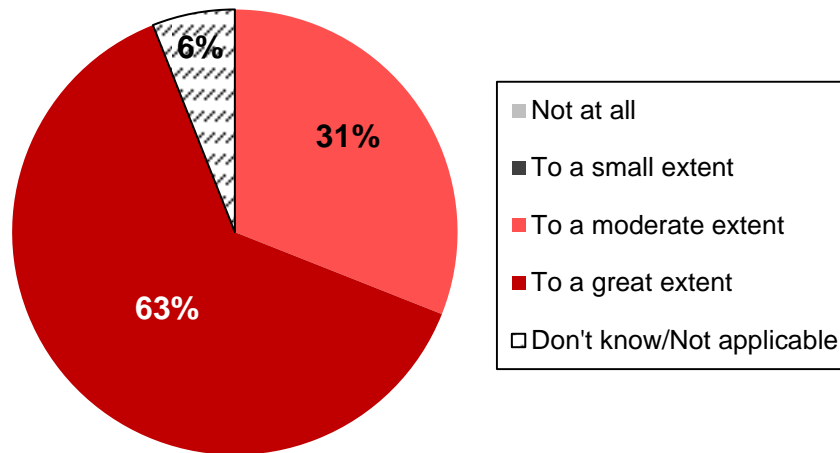
Next Level of Work (NLOW) plans developed during Day 2 of IR provide a set of steps the host school members can undertake over the next year to further work on their problems of practice and specifically, the patterns identified by the IR network. Almost two-thirds (63%) of host school participants indicated that they were using the NLOW to a great extent, but about a quarter were only using the NLOW to a moderate extent and 11% to a small extent.

Figure 10
Development of an In-school Network



A clear sign that being part of a network empowers schools to use IR is demonstrated by the fact that over a quarter of participants (28%) said that they had already developed an in-school network. Of the rest, 63% said they were planning to, but hadn't started yet. Only 9% (n=3) of participants said that they were not planning to develop an in-school network.

Figure 11
Future Sustainability of IR Network



While 63% said that their network was sustainable to a great extent, 31% said that it was only sustainable to a moderate extent and 6% said that they didn't know/was not applicable. This suggests that at least some participants are uncertain about whether the networks will be sustained in the future.

Participant Characteristics

It is useful to develop a profile of the educators who participated in IR during the 2017-2018 school year and specifically those who completed the survey. It is also helpful to examine attendance at the eight days of rounds offered within each cohort.

Although surveys were emailed to all participants, the survey data shown in Table 1 represent eleven schools. Two other schools initially or sporadically participated.

Table 1
Schools Represented in Participant Survey
N=32

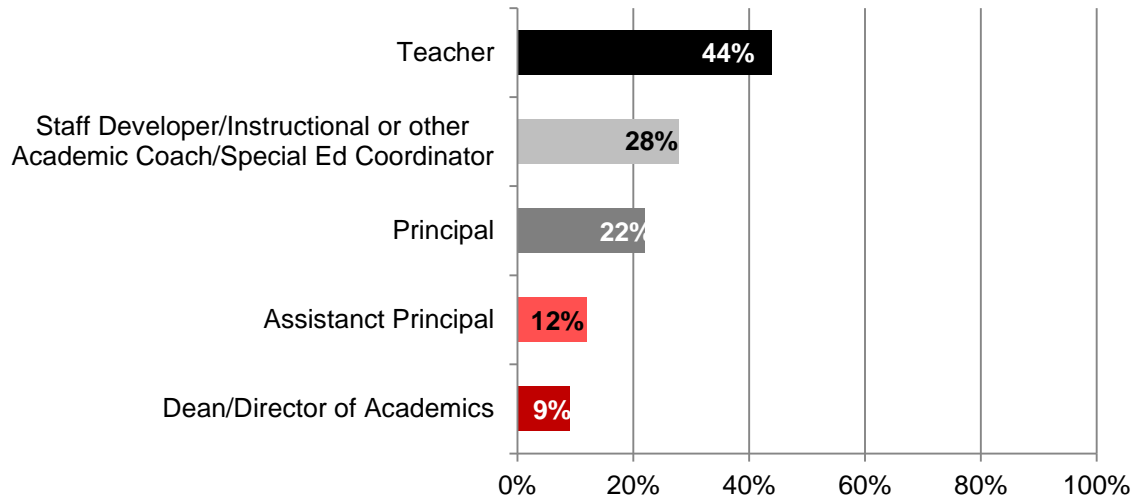
Cohort 1 - Charter School Network	n	%
Imagine Me Leadership CS	2	6%
New Dawn	2	6%
Hellenic Classical	4	13%
JVL Wildcat	5	16%
Cohort 2 - NYC Department of Education Network		
Jean Nuzzi IS 109Q	1	3%
Louis Pasteur MS 67Q	2	6%
Nathaniel Hawthorne MS 74Q	5	16%
School for Civics in the Community IS 230Q	2	6%
Springfield Gardens IS 59Q	4	13%
William Wordsworth PS 48Q	4	13%
Woodside Community PS 361Q	1	3%

**Notes*

- 1. Percents in table do not equal 100% due to rounding.*
- 2. Several schools that participated in IR are not represented in these data. School 30Q280 and Invictus Preparatory Charter School participated in IR #1 and #2, but not IR #3 or #4.*

Figure 12 shows the roles of participants. Since many participants wore multiple hats, respondents were asked to “indicate all that apply”. Forty-four percent (44%) of participants were teachers, 22% were principals and 12% were assistant principals. Over a quarter (28%) reported that they were staff developers, instructional, math, and/or literacy coaches, or a special education coordinator. Since teams are intentionally comprised of administrators and teachers who come together as equals on a school team, participant teams reflected this diversity of membership.

Figure 12
Roles of Participants



IR participants were clearly experienced educators. Table 2 shows that participants had worked in education for an average of 17.5 years, with a range of 5-38 years. They reported working in their current school for an average of 9.4 years and in their current position for an average of 6.2 years.

Table 2
Participants' Years of Experience

Experience Level	Mean number of years	Range of years
Years you have worked in education	17.5	5-38
Years you have worked in current school	9.4	1-27
Years you have been working in your current position	6.2	1-21

Summary

- ❖ 2017-2018 Network Level Instructional Rounds participants were administered an online survey at the end of the school year to gauge their perceptions of the experience. Two-thirds of participants (67%; N=32) whose schools participated in IR for the whole school year completed the survey.
- ❖ IR participants made statistically significant ($p < .000$) skill gains in all skill areas measured. The skill gains, which included all of the critical steps of Instructional Rounds participation, were demonstrated across both New York City school cohorts (charter school network and Department of Education network).
- ❖ Participants reported a variety of outcomes in their network, their school team and themselves. Three-quarter (75%) or more said the following outcomes had been experienced in their network to a great extent:
 - developed a trusting and open network for conversation about school improvement (88%)*
 - benefited from seeing how a host school's problem of practice can be addressed via use of IR (78%) and*
 - improved the quality of professional conversations in the network (75%)*
- ❖ Over half of all participants reported a variety of outcomes on their school team to a great extent as well. Almost three-quarters (74%) reported that they *learned from their experience addressing a host school's problem of practice how to better address school improvement efforts at their own school* to a great extent.
- ❖ In terms of the impact on themselves, 89% reported that they *reflected more deeply about their own teaching practice* to a great extent, and 75% *initiated conversations with other educators about student learning* to a great extent.
- ❖ Three-quarters said that observing other teachers *influenced their classroom teaching* to a great extent.
- ❖ Two-thirds of participants were from schools that hosted IR during the school year. Being from a host school appeared to deepen participants' experience. Their skill gains were similar to other participants but they were significantly more likely to report outcomes on their school team and on themselves.



- ❖ Three-quarters or more of host school participants reported the following outcomes to a great extent.
 - clarify or refine your school's problem of practice (81%)
 - provide useful feedback aligned to your problem of practice (76%)
- ❖ Virtually all host school participants reported outcomes in all areas measured to a moderate or to a great extent.
- ❖ While only a little over a quarter of participants (28%) reported that they had *developed an in-school network*, 63% reported that they were *planning to, but haven't started yet* (only 9% said *no*, but 3% of those who said *no*--or one participant—indicated that they thought they would in the future).
- ❖ Almost two-thirds (63%) indicated that they thought the IR network they participated in was sustainable to a great extent and almost a third (31%) said to a moderate extent. Six percent indicated that they didn't know or not applicable.
- ❖ Comments made by participants on the survey and in interviews indicated that the experience was valuable to them and that they appreciated the quality of the CEI team and the support they provided to participants. ■