MEASURING FIDELITY

WHAT IS FIDELITY?

Fidelity refers to the extent to which planned procedures, activities, and roles (e.g. in a program or framework) are implemented in the way they were originally intended. Fidelity serves as a measure of fit between the planned procedures a school develops and the actual procedures that ensue (Jenson & Bender, 2014).

WHY DOES FIDELITY MATTER?

Research supports that programs and procedures that are not implemented in the way they were originally designed are often ineffective (Jenson & Bender, 2014).

Monitoring implementation fidelity aids in examining student outcomes and identifying if additional supports are needed (National Center on Intensive Intervention, n.d.).

FRAMEWORKS & FIDELITY

Schools in Colorado often utilize at least one framework, if not multiple. The following are among the most utilized frameworks in Colorado, which come with their own fidelity measures:

- Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) (listed below)
- Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS) (listed below)
- School Climate Improvement (listed below)

- Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child Model (WSCC)
- Trauma Responsive Schools/Behavioral Health

5 COMPONENTS OF FIDELITY:

Adherence
extent to which core components of a program are utilized (i.e. using original instructional techniques and procedures)

Exposure
dosage—number, frequency, and length of intervention sessions

Quality of Delivery
quality and thoroughness in preparation, skills, leadership, and enthusiasm

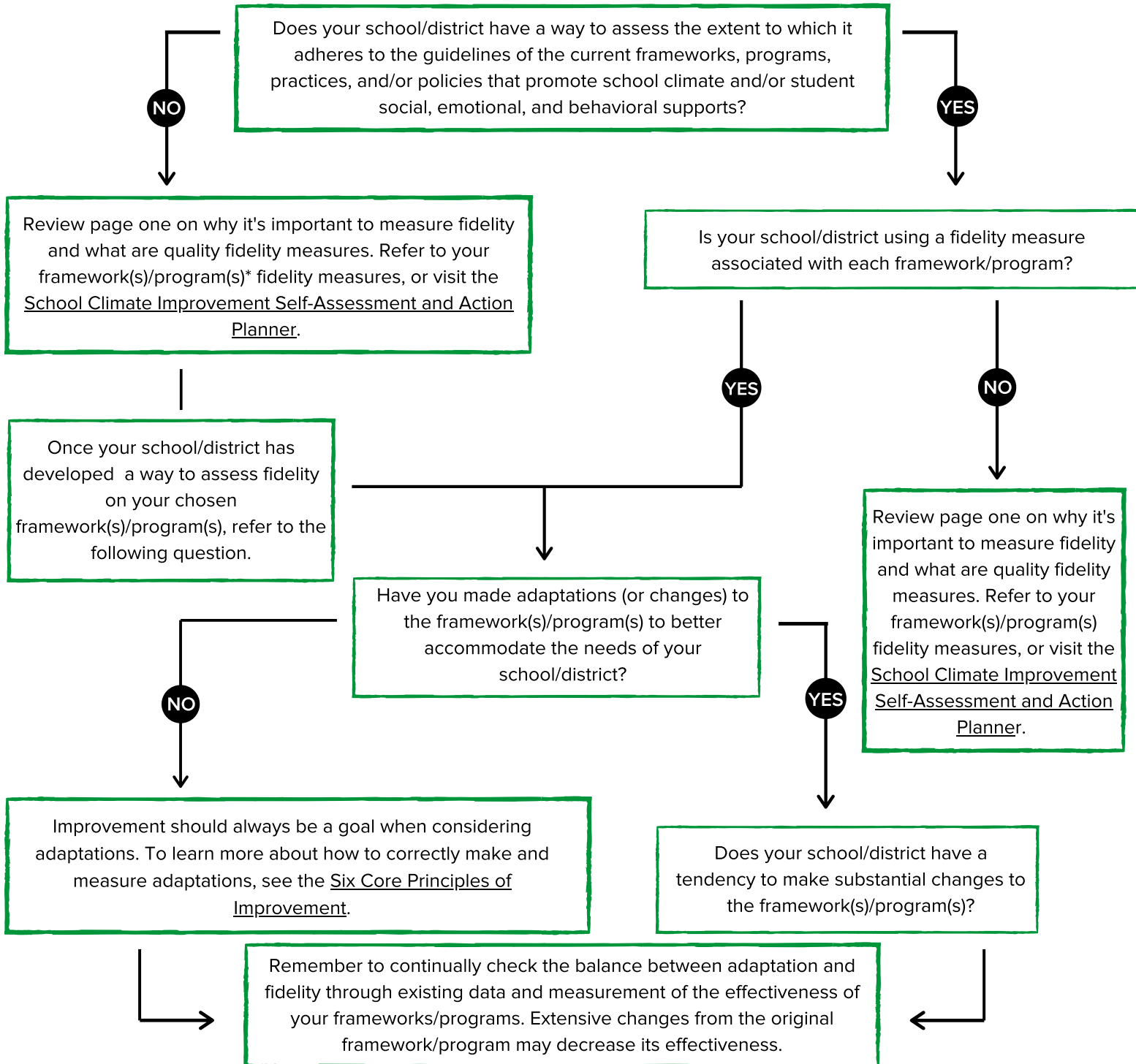**Participant Responsiveness**
participant's engagement with the program

Program Differentiation
extent to which components of the program are recognizable and identifiable

MEASURES OF FIDELITY

Programs and frameworks often offer measures of fidelity to ensure that the school community is able to assess their own adherence, exposure, quality of delivery, participant responsiveness, and program differentiation. In general, all fidelity assessments should be completed as a team at the school level to ensure consensus among multiple individuals. Below are some examples.

Framework	Components	Measure
Colorado Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (CO MTSS)	(1) Team-driven leadership, (2) Data-based problem-solving and decision-making, (3) Family, school, and community partnering, (4) Layered continuum of supports, (5) Evidence-based practices	School: Building Leadership Team Self-Assessment District: MTSS Leadership Team Self-Assessment
Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)	Includes a number of features/components assessed in 3 tiers: (1) Universal; (2) Targeted; (3) Intensive	SWPBIS Tiered Fidelity Inventory
School Climate Improvement	(1) Planning for school climate improvements (2) Engaging stakeholders (3) Collecting & reporting school climate data (4) Choosing & implementing school climate interventions (5) Monitoring & evaluating efforts	School Climate Improvement Self-Assessment & Action Planner

FIDELITY VS. ADAPTATION

There is always a push and pull between fidelity and adaptation when implementing a program or framework. It can be challenging, but necessary, to find a balance between the two that works in your unique school community.

Does your school/district have a way to assess the extent to which it adheres to the guidelines of the current frameworks, programs, practices, and/or policies that promote school climate and/or student social, emotional, and behavioral supports?

NO

Review page one on why it's important to measure fidelity and what are quality fidelity measures. Refer to your framework(s)/program(s)* fidelity measures, or visit the School Climate Improvement Self-Assessment and Action Planner.

Once your school/district has developed a way to assess fidelity on your chosen framework(s)/program(s), refer to the following question.

YES

Is your school/district using a fidelity measure associated with each framework/program?

YES

NO

Review page one on why it's important to measure fidelity and what are quality fidelity measures. Refer to your framework(s)/program(s) fidelity measures, or visit the School Climate Improvement Self-Assessment and Action Planner.

Have you made adaptations (or changes) to the framework(s)/program(s) to better accommodate the needs of your school/district?

NO

YES

Improvement should always be a goal when considering adaptations. To learn more about how to correctly make and measure adaptations, see the Six Core Principles of Improvement.

Does your school/district have a tendency to make substantial changes to the framework(s)/program(s)?

Remember to continually check the balance between adaptation and fidelity through existing data and measurement of the effectiveness of your frameworks/programs. Extensive changes from the original framework/program may decrease its effectiveness.

*For the purposes of this resource, framework/program is an all encompassing term that also integrates practices and policies

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Colorado Department of Education - School Culture and Climate
- National Implementation Research Network - Active Implementation Hub
- National Center on Intensive Intervention - Fidelity & Implementation Resources
- Edutopia - Plan for Supporting New Initiatives
- Carnegie Foundation - Continuous Improvement in Education
- Journal of Implementation Science

PREVENTION RESEARCH CENTER
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

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