Session 8A: Organizing Distributed Learning in Networks

ACTIVITY SHEET

Breakout 1:

Your task: Introduce yourselves and divide your group in two
Product: Two people are an "A" and two people are a "B"

1. Introductions:
    - What is your name?
    - Where are you from, geographically?
    - What is your experience with NICs?
        - New to improvement and NICs
        - Planning on running a NIC or a large improvement effort
        - Currently involved in a NIC or a large improvement effort
2. Identify two people to be an "A" and two people be a "B."

Be ready to return in **5 minutes (~1 minute per person)**

Case Reading:

Within each breakout group, half should read one case, and half read the other.
- **Case A** is Network to Transform Teaching
- **Case B** is Central Valley Networked Improvement Community

Breakout 2:

Your task: Read and analyze cases of networked learning
Product: Team share of what influenced decisions about learning strategy?

1. Identify a reporter
2. Describe for each case: What was the learning strategy?
    - Where did they focus?
    - How are people organized?
    - How is the learning structured?
3. Group Discussion:
    - What were the benefits and drawbacks of various decisions?
    - What influenced their decisions?
4. Reporter prepares to share in whole group chat box.

Be ready to return in **20 minutes**

Network to Transform Teaching (NT3)

Chartering Phase

In 2013 the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards received a grant from the U.S. Department of Education to launch a networked improvement community to increase the number of accomplished, Board-certified teachers. During the grant application process, the National Board invited long-time supporters of Board certification in four states and two districts to be initial members of the network that they collectively decided to call the Network to Transform Teaching, or NT3. As the network name implies, from the start ambitions were aspirational; however, the network's focus was broad. It is important to note that participating locales received grant funding for their participation in the network.

Deciding where to focus. The National Board and its partners came to the table with an interest in growing the numbers of Board-certified teachers nationally. In addition, an initial scan of research regarding value propositions for Board certification revealed a need for leadership roles for Board-certified teachers, with many experts citing that Board-certified teachers feel "all dressed up with nowhere to go." Further, anecdotal evidence suggested that Board-certified teachers are positioned to serve as strong leaders of instructional improvement. As long-time supporters of Board certification, network members had been grappling with these challenges for years and brought with them specific plans for what they intended to accomplish. The network Hub faced the challenge of turning those individually held plans into a shared path forward. NT3 launched with the following aims:

1. **Increase the number of Board certification candidates submitting their first component to 4,000 in 2014-15, then to 8,000 in 2015-16, with at least 50% or more increase in candidates in high-need schools.**

2. **By fall 2016, schools, districts, and states capitalize on instructional expertise of board-certified teachers so that over two years we increase by 50% the percentage of board-certified teachers in identifiable instructional leadership roles.**

Improvement Learning Phase: Year 1

Network members: NT3 launched in early 2014 with 25 members representing labor, management, and practitioner networks in four states and two districts. Generally, all of the network members were in an administrative role in a state / local education agency or state / local union affiliate. The majority of network members were themselves Board-certified teachers. The represented organizations had experience working together as a community of practice, loosely tied and focused on sharing best practice.

8A: Organizing Distributed Learning in Networks
Case Study Task Card and Cases

Organization of the improvement work: The improvement effort was guided by two driver diagrams (below), or separate theories guiding them toward two separate goals. The driver diagrams were created democratically by the members based on their deep experience supporting Board certification for decades. Members in each participating locale made a decision as to how they divided their effort across the two aims. After moving through a process to translate the network-level aim to their locale, members then decided on which drivers they would focus.

Overall, learning was broadly distributed across the driver diagrams based on local interest, a decision that was made purposefully by the Hub to focus on building will of members to work together in this new way that called for more discipline and a higher degree of "commonness" across disparate organizations. The Hub organized affinity groups around the drivers to create a space where members could share their learnings.

Aim 1:

Increase the number of National Board Certification candidates submitting their first component to 4,000 in 2014-15, then to 8,000 in 2015-16, with at least 50% or more increase in candidates in high-need schools.

A. Investment in board certification by system leaders
 1. See the value to district and to student learning
 2. Action plan for programs and policy

B. Pursuit of board certification among teachers
 1. Connection to motivation of teachers
 2. Information about professional growth possibilities and advantages of board certification
 3. Strategies for identifying "ready" candidates

C. Support for candidates
 1. Orientation (e.g., Jump Start)
 2. Yearlong support
 3. Support provider training

Definitely incomplete and possibly wrong. Revised 5/30/2014.

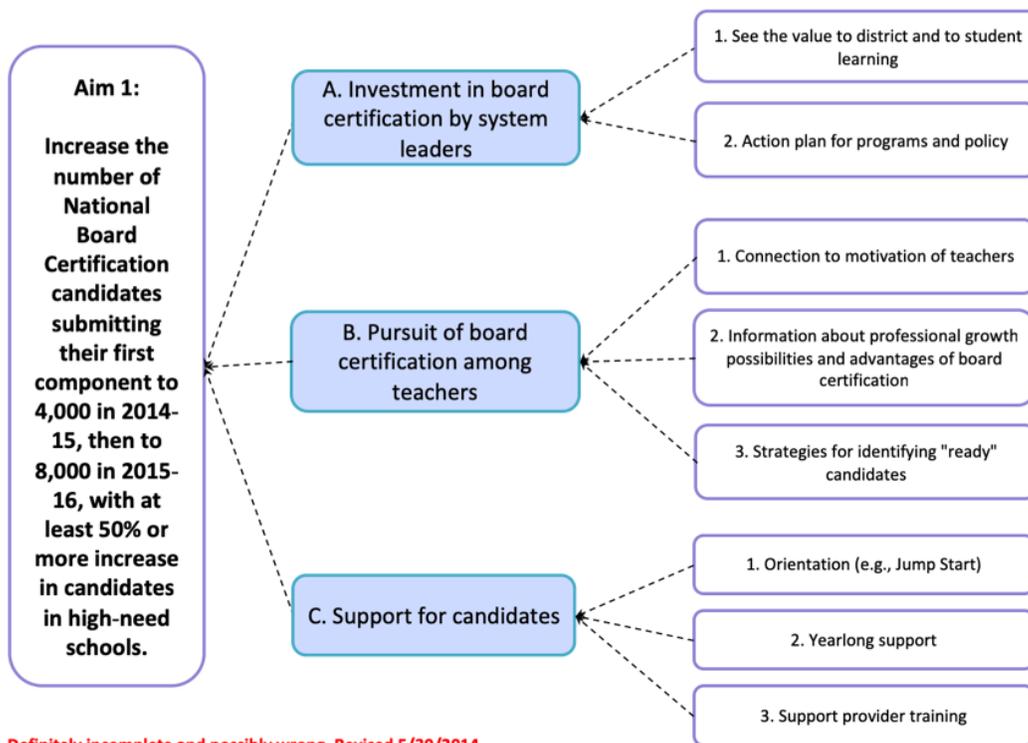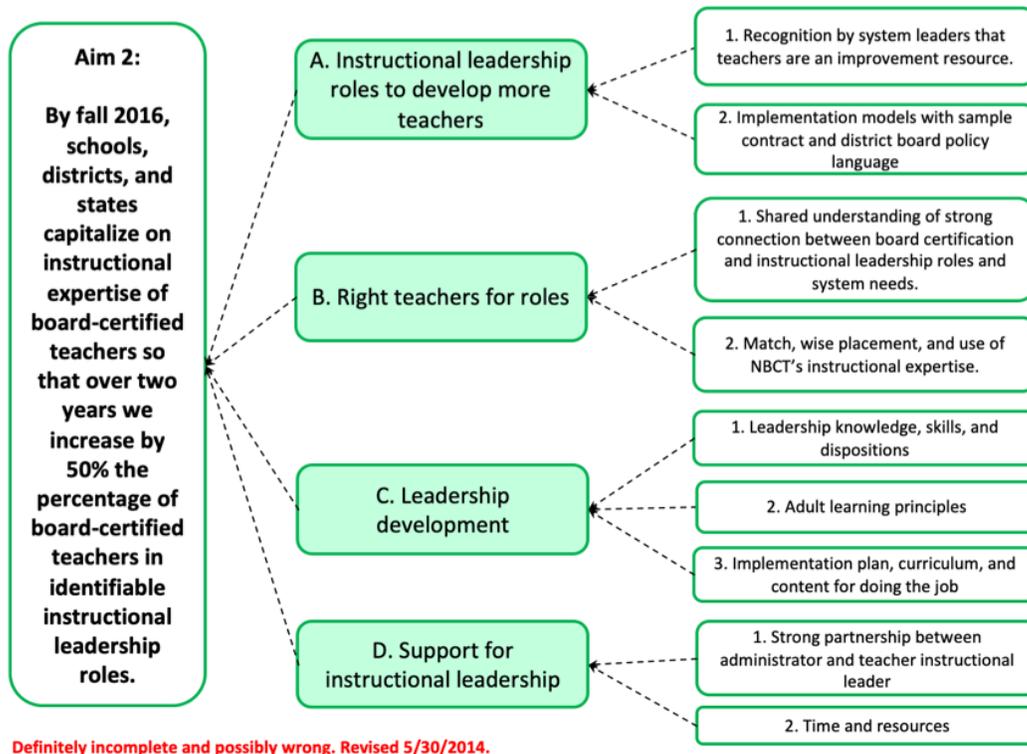| Aim 2:		
By fall 2016, schools, districts, and states capitalize on instructional expertise of board-certified teachers so that over two years we increase by 50% the percentage of board-certified teachers in identifiable instructional leadership roles.	A. Instructional leadership roles to develop more teachers	1. Recognition by system leaders that teachers are an improvement resource.
		2. Implementation models with sample contract and district board policy language
	B. Right teachers for roles	1. Shared understanding of strong connection between board certification and instructional leadership roles and system needs.
		2. Match, wise placement, and use of NBCT's instructional expertise.
	C. Leadership development	1. Leadership knowledge, skills, and dispositions
		2. Adult learning principles
		3. Implementation plan, curriculum, and content for doing the job
	D. Support for instructional leadership	1. Strong partnership between administrator and teacher instructional leader
		2. Time and resources

Definitely incomplete and possibly wrong. Revised 5/30/2014.

Network structures: During Year 1 NT3 hosted three, three-day network convenings with action periods between. Network convenings focused heavily on sharing tests of change happening within the network and bringing forward particular tools that showed promise. There was also explicit teaching of improvement science in these sessions. That teaching together with these opportunities to share learnings built a lot of energy around using improvement science. Members were starting to understand variation across contexts for the changes they were testing related to recruitment of Board certification candidates. Importantly, they were better able to understand the limits of their "tried and true" approaches to candidate recruitment and support

Action periods were very localized. Given that each locale chose to start in different places within the driver diagram, the Hub deployed a lot of 1:1 support. The Hub held monthly network-wide meetings, bringing together network members from state-level unions and education agencies. These meetings were sparsely attended given that each locale was pursuing their own work, and the value proposition for learning from other contexts was not yet strong.

Learnings from year 1 and path forward: In many ways, the theory of improvement used in Year 1 represented a layering on of an improvement approach to traditional thinking about Board certification. For instance, a key change tested across the network at this stage was "shoulder tapping" or informal peer-to-peer recruitment of Board certification. While there was some success with this strategy, the work of supporting Board certification remained in addition to and outside of teachers'
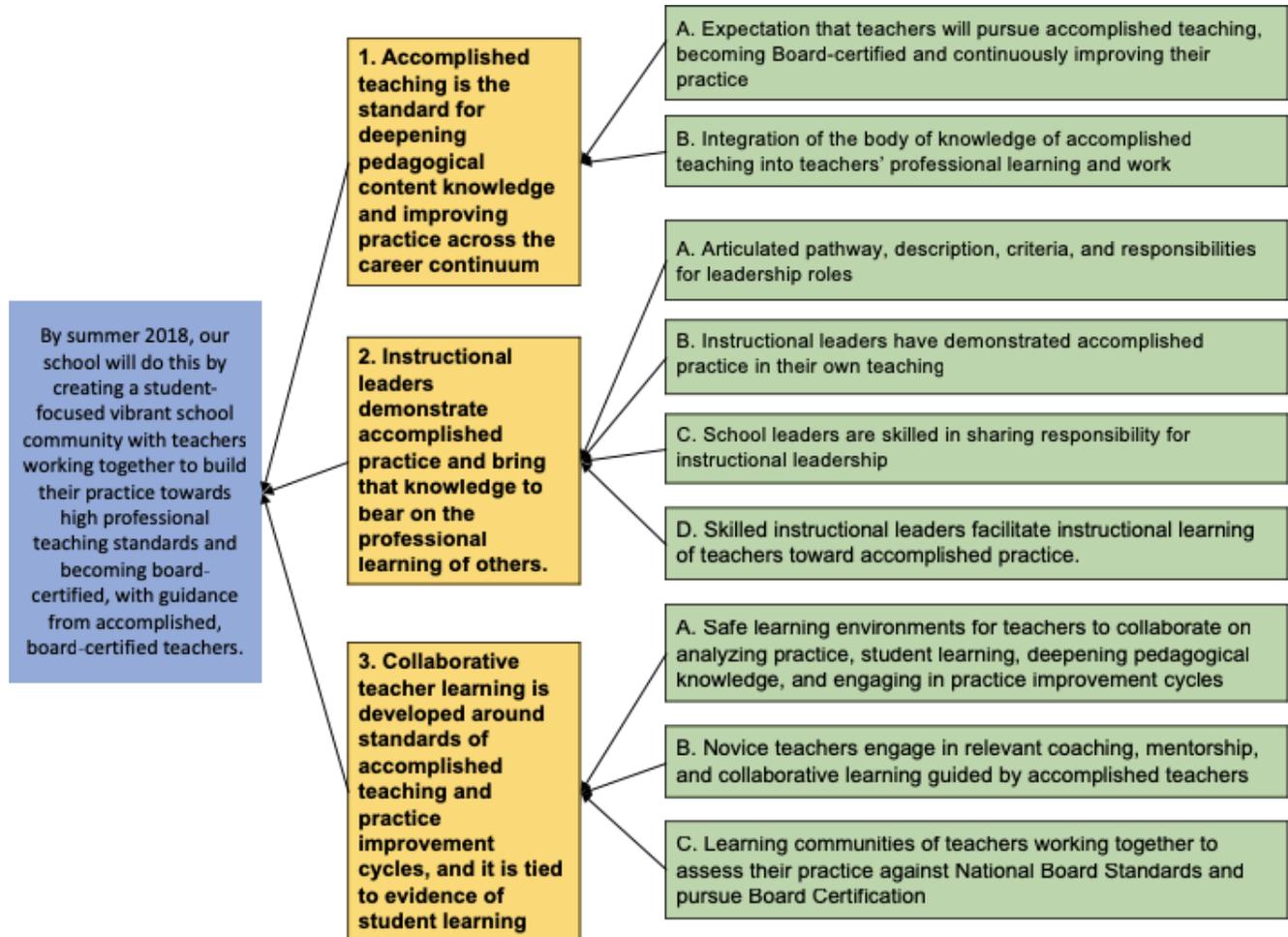
full-time teaching work. The pace of improvement was similar to years prior; no marked change occurred in outcomes, but the use of improvement science challenged traditional ways of supporting Board certification. For example, members learned that peer recognition is a strong influencer in motivating teachers to pursue Board certification, but it is not sufficient. What teachers really needed were systemic supports within their school to scaffold the certification process.

Armed with data, the Hub took advantage of the natural transition into a new academic year to pause and reframe the work. The Hub convened a group of experts to think together about what it would be like for Board certification to become an embedded part of teachers' daily lives and professional learning. The result was a reframed, user-centered theory of improvement based on processes and structures at the school level (see next page).

The Hub asked member states to invite districts to participate in the network, who would in turn invite schools. Soon, the network transformed to include teacher-administrator improvement teams from over 100 schools. The state- and district-level members who were on board from the beginning reimagined their role to focus on creating conditions for improvement at the school level. As a result, the Hub shifted its support for improvement teams from 1:1 coaching to group coaching calls around similar foci within the driver diagram.

By summer 2018, our school will do this by creating a student-focused vibrant school community with teachers working together to build their practice towards high professional teaching standards and becoming board-certified, with guidance from accomplished, board-certified teachers.

1. Accomplished teaching is the standard for deepening pedagogical content knowledge and improving practice across the career continuum

A. Expectation that teachers will pursue accomplished teaching, becoming Board-certified and continuously improving their practice

B. Integration of the body of knowledge of accomplished teaching into teachers' professional learning and work

2. Instructional leaders demonstrate accomplished practice and bring that knowledge to bear on the professional learning of others.

A. Articulated pathway, description, criteria, and responsibilities for leadership roles

B. Instructional leaders have demonstrated accomplished practice in their own teaching

C. School leaders are skilled in sharing responsibility for instructional leadership

D. Skilled instructional leaders facilitate instructional learning of teachers toward accomplished practice.

3. Collaborative teacher learning is developed around standards of accomplished teaching and practice improvement cycles, and it is tied to evidence of student learning

A. Safe learning environments for teachers to collaborate on analyzing practice, student learning, deepening pedagogical knowledge, and engaging in practice improvement cycles

B. Novice teachers engage in relevant coaching, mentorship, and collaborative learning guided by accomplished teachers

C. Learning communities of teachers working together to assess their practice against National Board Standards and pursue Board Certification

Central Valley Networked Improvement Community (CVNIC)

Chartering Phase

In the fall of 2015, the Tulare County Office of Education (TCOE) formed an initiation team comprised of county and district leaders to launch their first networked improvement community to support instructional improvement in Tulare County. TCOE's long-term vision was to eventually support multiple NICs on different outcomes. For now, they had an opportunity with three years of funding to launch an initial NIC and they would build from there.

Deciding where to focus: After reviewing their student performance data and talking with different stakeholders in their county, the initiation team narrowed the focus from working on all subject areas across all grades to focusing specifically on fifth-grade math. They choose fifth-grade math because it was a substantial problem across the county--only 17% of fifth-grade students were proficient in math on the new state assessment in comparison to 30% across the state and there was a consistent dip in scores in fifth grade. In addition, district leaders indicated that they would welcome attention and support in this area. It seemed like a good place to start. Thus, in May 2016, TCOE launched the Central Valley NIC (CVNIC) with the following aim:

To improve fifth-grade math proficiency from 17% to 51% in CVNIC by 2019.

## Improvement Learning Phase: Year 1

Network members. The network began with 41 fifth-grade math teachers across 18 schools in eight districts. Teachers worked in grade-level, site-based teams. They were supported by an improvement coach, typically a math coach that worked at either the school or district level. These coaches would receive training in improvement science while they were coaching teams in the first year. Districts also identified a district leader that served as a sponsor for the work and participated in network meetings. The hub anticipated expanding to more schools in each of the districts in the coming years.

In addition, CVNIC had an independent opportunity to work with Jo Boaler—a Stanford University researcher known for her groundbreaking work on mathematics teaching. The CVNIC hub team knew reaching their aim required big shifts in instruction and thought that Dr. Boaler could provide just the sort of inspiration that was needed.

Organization of the improvement work. The hub planned to focus on classroom culture and mindsets in the first part of the year, capitalizing on Jo Boaler's visits to the county. They would then segue into a focus on instructional practices, where they planned to bring in the work of *5 Practices for Orchestrating Productive Mathematics Discussions*. They used their driver diagram to represent the different practices that teachers would engage in during Year 1 and would build it out as they went.

Driver Diagram
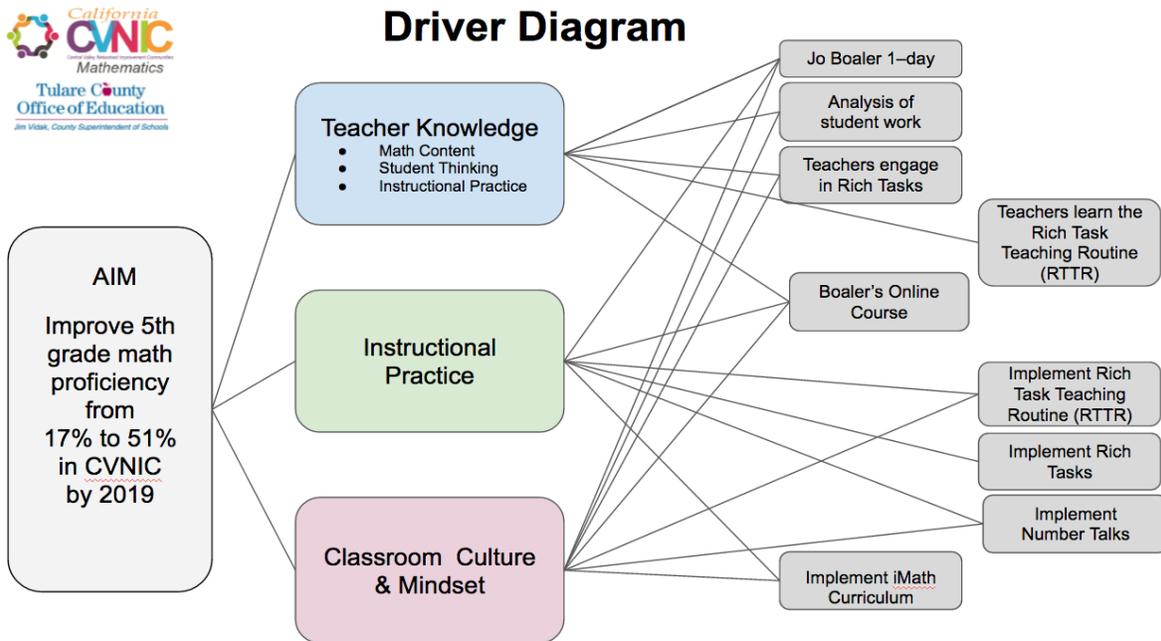
Network structures. Over the course of the year, CVNIC held five, one-day network meetings with action periods in between. The network meetings focused heavily on building capacity in math with some improvement and networking looped in. All of the teams in the network focused on the same driver during each action period. The hub alternated between having people test the same change idea within that driver during the action period and having local teams select their own areas of focus. Tied to their work with Jo Boaler and the rhythm of the school year, in Action Period 1, all teachers used the same set of lessons (iMath) to launch the school year and collected the same data. In Action Period 2, local teams selected their own foci within the area of classroom culture and mindsets. They took a similar approach with the introduction of the rich-task routine.

The hub sought to strike a balance between local and network learning. The action periods where changes were tested in common allowed for conversations across local teams, but risked people feeling like they were doing tasks simply because the hub told them to. Action periods that were more open helped to promote curiosity about solving local problems but were difficult to support given how new everyone was to improvement science. The use of data was particularly tricky without some centralized support.

Learnings from year 1 and path forward. At the close of Year 1, CVNIC took a step back to see where they were and where they wanted to go next. They did not yet have access to state test data to see how much progress students had made, but they were optimistic--teachers and administrators had anecdotally shared that students seemed to persevere more while taking the test. As they revised their

driver diagram for Year 2, they distinguished between the changes that were "must-haves" vs. "nice to haves," which resulted in the removal of initial changes off their driver diagram. They prioritized areas for future improvement work (indicated with stars).
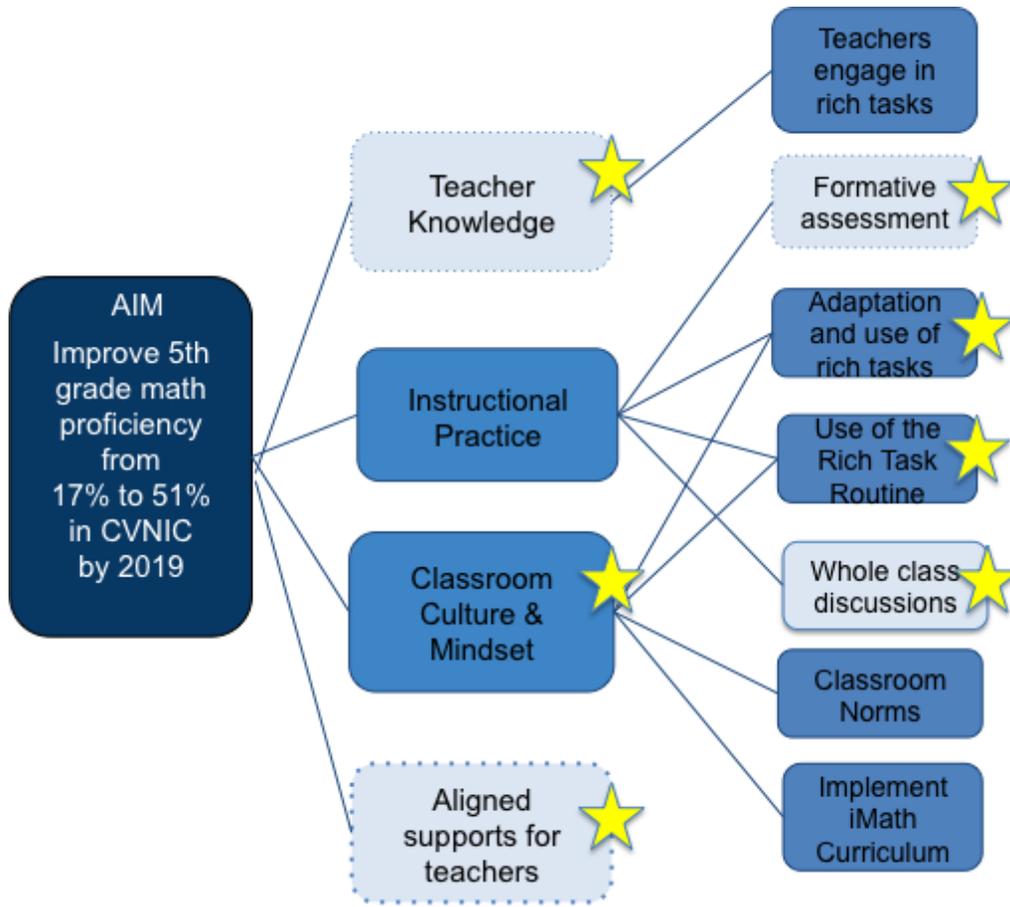
In addition, CVNIC decided not to add any schools. They considered expanding to sixth grade but ultimately decided to offer a workshop for sixth-grade teachers but stay focused on fifth grade. However, they did recognize that they would need to engage more principals directly in the work in Year 2, recognizing that if the work was to spread to other classrooms, principals would need to play an active role in creating the support structures to do this.