



Indistar® in a Nutshell

Indistar® was created by Academic Development Institute (ADI) in 2007 with ideas sparked from years of working in comprehensive school reform. In 2005, ADI produced *The Mega System: Deciding. Learning. Connecting. A Handbook for Continuous Improvement Within a Community of the School* and then in 2007, *The Handbook on Restructuring and Substantial School Improvement*. These publications provided the substance and validity from experts in the field from which the framework was built.

The skeleton of Indistar®--the bone structure that holds it all together—is the effective practices of high performing schools. These practices are then broken down into plain language indicators so that those who are closest to the students (principals, teachers, Leadership Teams) can very easily determine if they are doing that indicator or not. If they are not, then the team applies its own ingenuity to achieve the results it desires for its students.

To support the team in this work, ADI created a web-based platform to guide the team, provide a space for the team to keep track of its work, and to allow the team to be transparent to all its stakeholders. The web platform also provides tools and resources to assist the team in both understanding the meaning of the indicators and the research that supports them, as well as provide videos to show real teachers demonstrating the indicators in their classrooms and schools. The research (Wise Ways®) is updated continuously as more research comes out or more examples of practice are found.

Indistar is not a complicated tool. It is based on four processes:

Set Direction: The plan that is created in Indistar should reflect the school's vision for its students and its mission. Set Direction gives the school an opportunity to "tell its story" and to set goals for all the students in its care. The people closest to the students make the decisions on how best to serve their students.

Practice Focused Collaboration: All schools hold meetings. Faculty meetings. Instructional meetings. Planning meetings. But, how often do those meetings focus on what really makes a difference to student outcomes? How often are the meetings centered on research-based effective practices aimed at improving what the adults do that affect student learning? That is where the rubber meets the road; that is practice focused collaboration. Working together to get better. Finding success in teams. Indistar guides the conversation and provides research briefs and other tools to inform the team.

Success Cycle: Schools are well versed in creating plans. Plans for Title I. Plans for special education. Plans for equity. Plans for schoolwide. In Indistar, a Leadership Team focuses on a plan for success—working on indicators of effective practices that will lead all teachers and staff to greater heights in the service of their students. That is a cycle of success. Keep reaching higher.

Checking progress: Indistar provides reports to keep everyone informed and on the right track. It also provides a place to share plans, activities, and successes with all stakeholders—a guest page.

That's it. Set your direction. Meet as a team and discuss what is important in a culture of candor—adults getting better in their own professional practices together. Make plans on how to improve very specific



indicators of effective practice. Monitor the progress. Share the success with stakeholders and the school community. Pretty simple.

Indistar® keeps it simple because actually improving professional practices—what the adults do—is sometimes very difficult work. Coaching helps—schools find value in the guidance of a well-seasoned coach who can enter coaching comments and give feedback on the plans of the school through the coaching feature in Indistar. Having access to research briefs as does having access to tools and videos. But, it is the day to day commitment of the school Leadership Team, Instructional Teams, and school leadership that makes the difference. Indistar® supports that work.

When teams are engaged in discussion about the things that matter most to them, and encouraged to apply their ingenuity in mastering their challenges and achieving their goals, the process is a professional joy. Embrace the process, and enjoy its richness. The time saved by an efficient online system can be applied to the more meaningful work of teams doing what they know is best for their students.