

## Interview Transcript: Evaluate implementation to document what you are doing

- **Joe Gallagher**, magnet project director, New York City School District 22
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### Interview Highlights

- District and school-site staff can use documentation logs to record and access information about all aspects of magnet program implementation.
- Tools for evaluating program implementation can also be useful in guiding staff to implement the program more effectively.
- A magnet program director can play a part in bringing school staff onboard for the evaluation process.

I am Joe Gallagher and I am the magnet project director in District 22 in Brooklyn in New York City.

It's important to document implementation. Often, you know, we make a lot of assumptions in implementing programs. You write a proposal, you say you are going to do something, and you move on. And having a record of what you are talking about is important. I mean, if you can't really document what you have done, you can't prove what you have done, how can you prove that your results are valid?

We work with the Metis Associates, which is a New York City research and evaluation firm. They did the evaluation planning part of the proposal, so they have developed a number of documents for the schools to do. There is actually a documentation log or template that they use for all of the different areas of magnet activities: there is planning, magnet planning; there is outreach and recruitment; there is staff development, curriculum development; there is enrichment, and just general magnet activities. It documents the dates of things, what happens on those days, who is involved, what kind of follow-up there is, perhaps. The evaluation—and particularly the documentation templates or documentation logs—can serve as a guide for people in the schools in implementing the program.

As part of the documentation template, schools were given the assignment of developing magnet standards, coming up with criteria to judge those standards, and actually testing students to see if they've achieved those standards. So in the beginning you had school magnet people who didn't know what magnet standards were. As we went through this, we explained to them what magnet standards

are; the type of things that you would expect a child to learn and to know and be able to do because they went to your particular magnet school. And explaining that is very useful for them to see exactly what it is they have to produce. You know, they have to produce actual standards, and ways to judge those standards, and then results from kids after they've had the program and you can see what they have achieved.

Working with principals and getting the schools involved with magnet documentation is a bit of an art; you have to get buy-in during the planning stage. And, once you come to that understanding, it makes it easier, once you get the grant and you have to implement. I think you have to be reasonable on what you expect, you have to be positive and encouraging about what they are doing in terms of the evaluation and documentation. You have to be supportive of their staff. Each magnet school has somebody that's in charge—in our program we call them “site coordinators”—at the magnet school. It's ultimately their responsibility for getting me the documentation. You have to be supportive of the site coordinator; you have to assist them in how to fill out the documentation, provide resources for them. It's a difficult job. I mean, teaching is difficult; being a principal is extremely difficult. You know, people in our schools have tough jobs.

And I think that, as a project director for this type of program, one of your major tasks is to be positive about what you are doing, so that you convey to the people who are working in the program that they are doing a good job; that it is possible for them to be effective; and how we are going to work together to make sure that this thing works. We need to make it work. Magnet schools are places where good things need to happen, okay; that parents and the children in those schools rely on us to use the resources we get effectively, to make sure that we have a real good, positive impact on what happens to those children in our magnet school. So, for me, a big part, I think, a big part of my effectiveness is how well I convey the fact that it's possible to do a great job, and we are going to help you do a great job, and that when you do a great job, it's going to work.