Implementation Science and Practice in Schools: Unique Obstacles and Common Opportunities

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Determinants, Strategies, & Outcomes
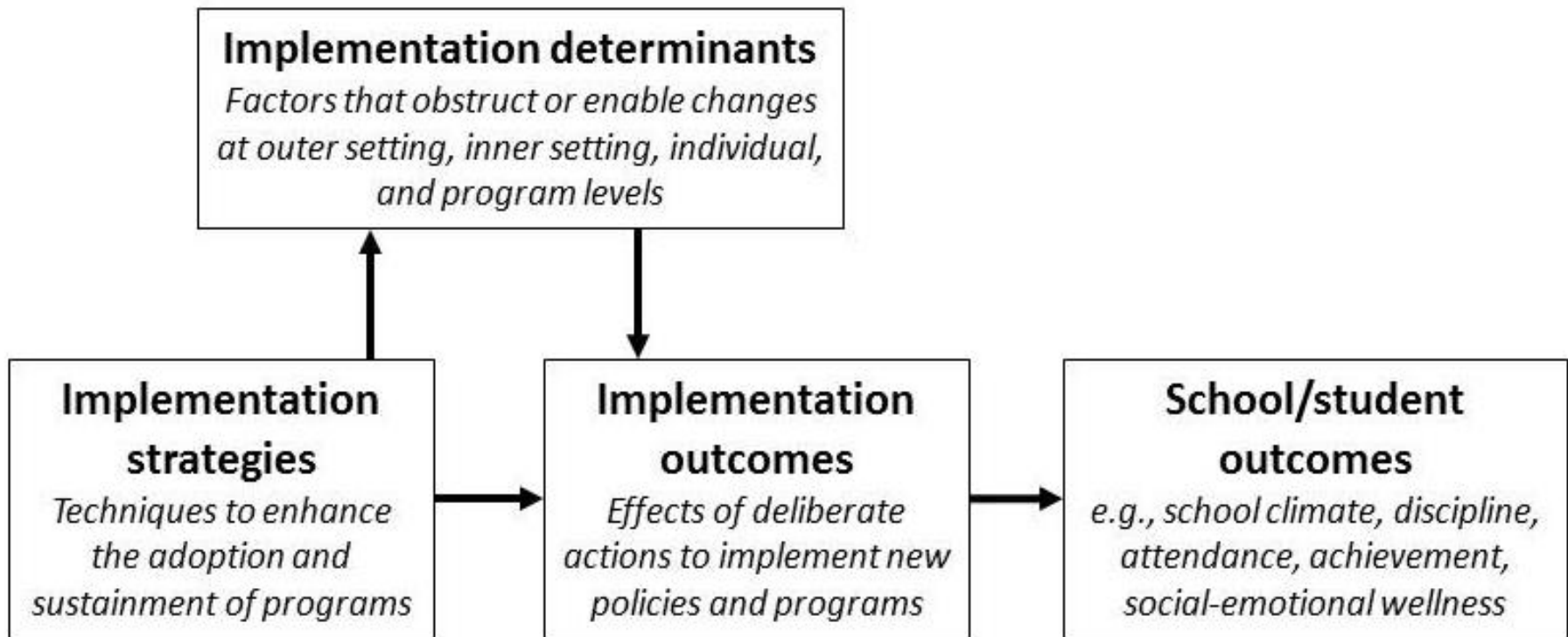
Implementation determinants
Factors that obstruct or enable changes at outer setting, inner setting, individual, and program levels

Implementation strategies
Techniques to enhance the adoption and sustainment of programs

Implementation outcomes
Effects of deliberate actions to implement new policies and programs

School/student outcomes
e.g., school climate, discipline, attendance, achievement, social-emotional wellness
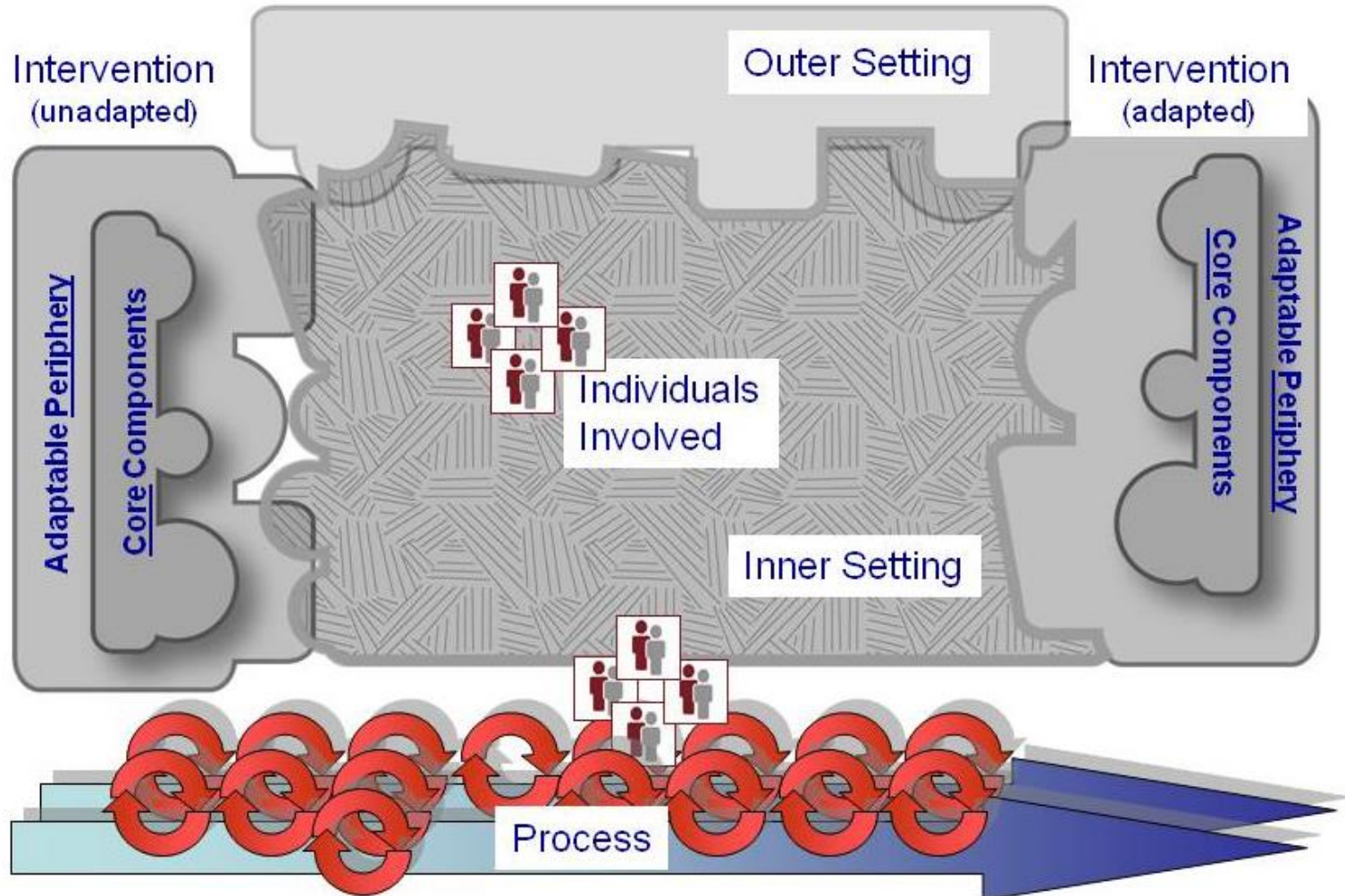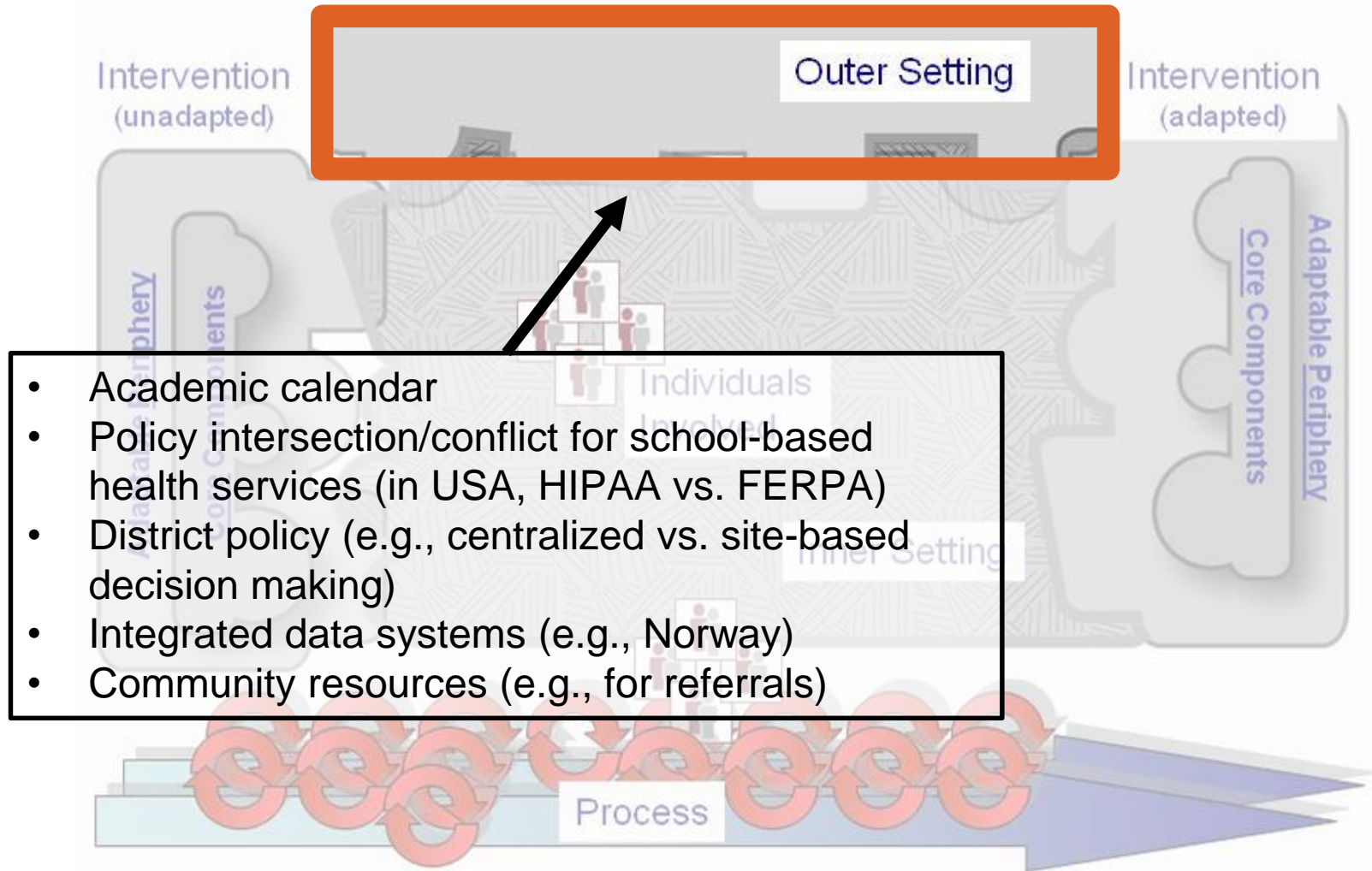
(Lyon & Bruns, in press; adapted from Lewis et al., 2017)

Implementation Frameworks (*n* = 61+)

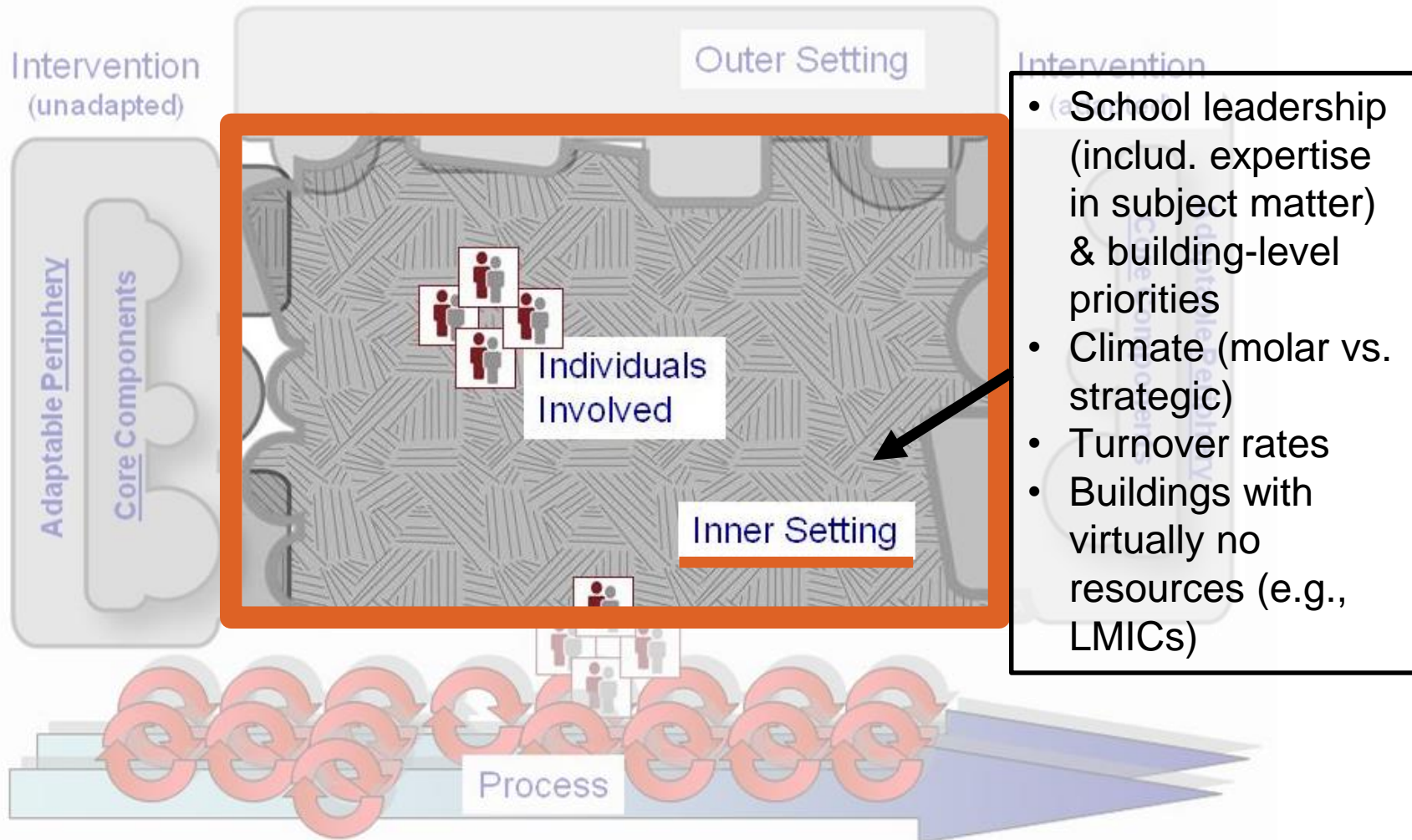**ONE EXAMPLE: Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research (CFIR; Damschroder et al., 2009)**
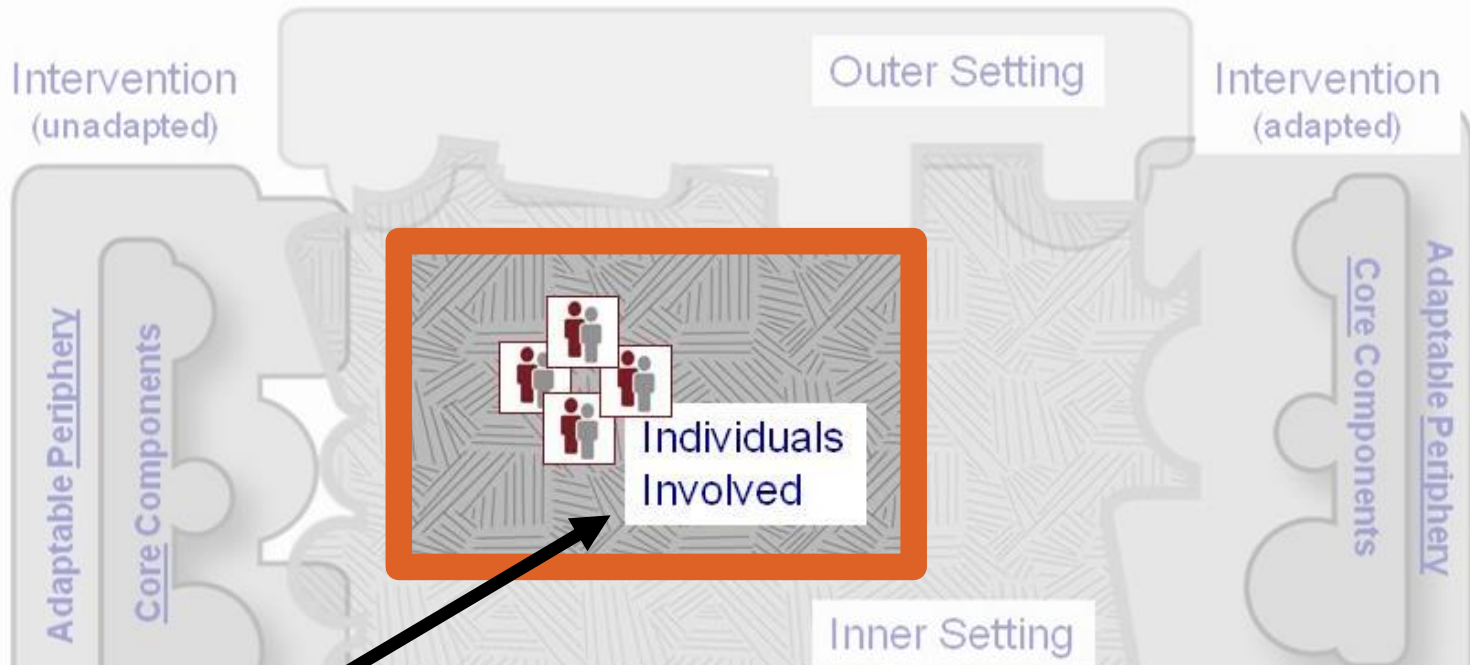
System Level: *Outer Setting*

Intervention (unadapted)

Intervention (adapted)

Outer Setting

Adaptable Periphery

Core Components

Core Components

Adaptable Periphery

Individuals Involved

Inner Setting

- Academic calendar
- Policy intersection/conflict for school-based health services (in USA, HIPAA vs. FERPA)
- District policy (e.g., centralized vs. site-based decision making)
- Integrated data systems (e.g., Norway)
- Community resources (e.g., for referrals)

Process

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System Level: *Inner Setting*

- School leadership (includ. expertise in subject matter) & building-level priorities
- Climate (molar vs. strategic)
- Turnover rates
- Buildings with virtually no resources (e.g., LMICs)

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System Level: *Individuals*

- Professionals with diverse backgrounds (e.g., differing knowledge, role expectations)
- Attitudes toward evidence
- Beliefs about initiative stability (i.e., "flavor of the month")
- Wide range of student need and severity
- Student diversity (ethnic, racial, cultural, gender, economic, etc.)

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System Level: *Intervention*
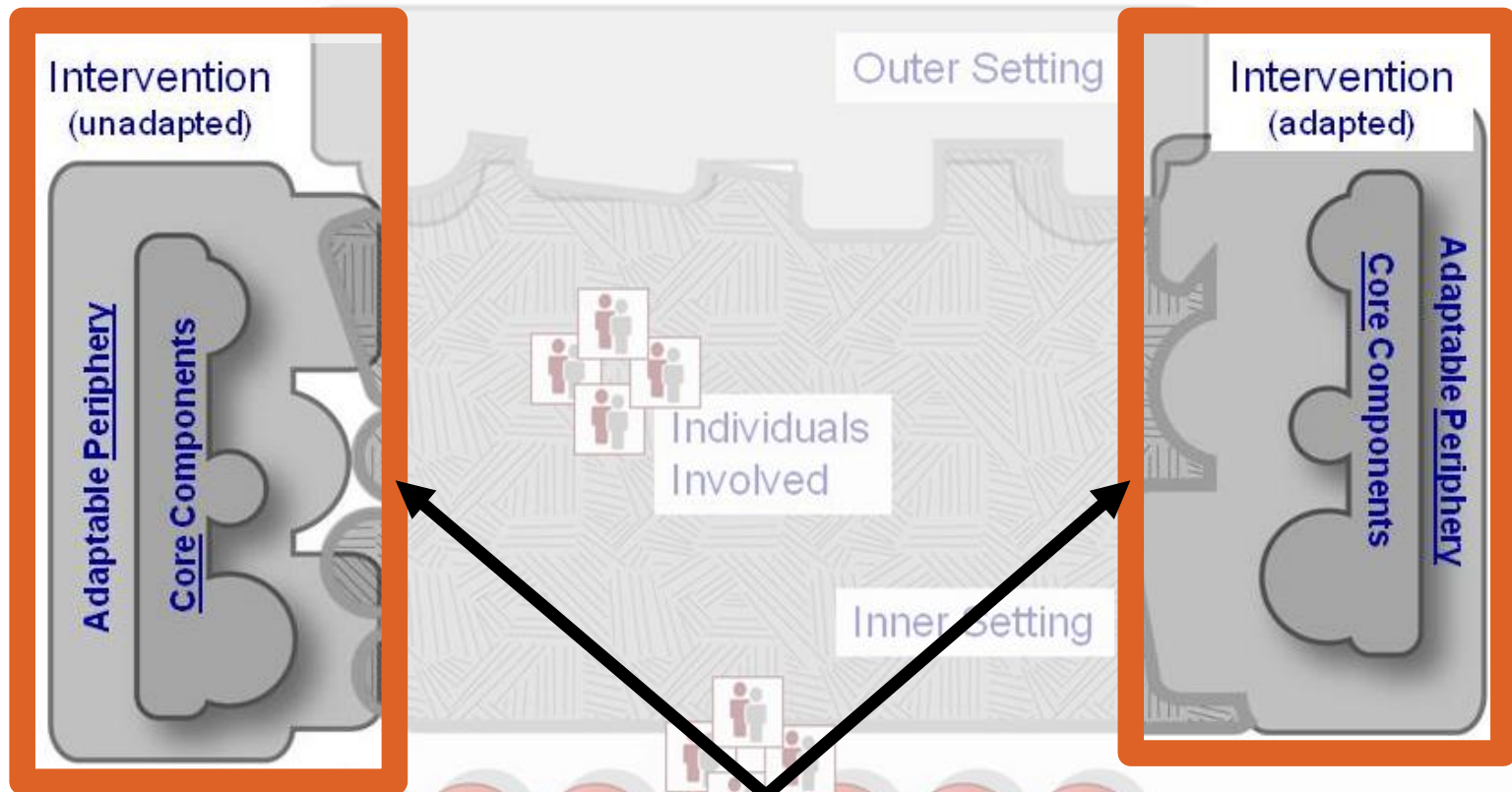
- Designed for schools vs. adapted to schools
- Interventions often need to be multilevel
- Intervention usability / design quality
- Plenty of non-evidence based programs and practices that may need *de-adoption*

Level: *Process*

- Multi-year commitment (potential mismatch with academic calendar?)
- Implementation strategies (beyond "train and hope," still most common in schools) should be matched to local determinants
- Bottom-up vs. top-down

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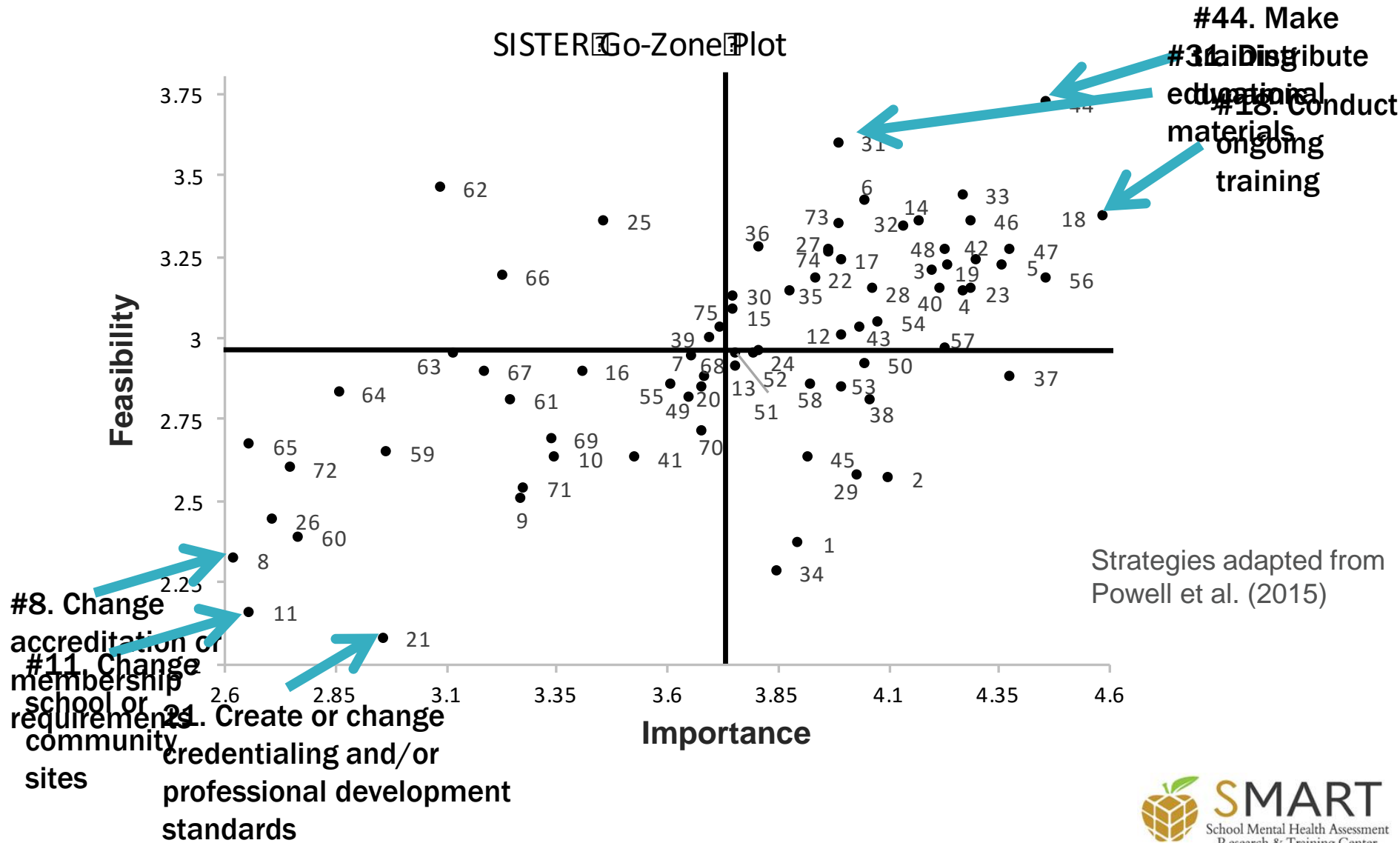Research & Training Center

Process: School-Adapted Implementation Strategies (*n* = 75) (Lyon et al., under review)

SISTER Go-Zone Plot

Feasibility / Importance scatter plot with the following annotations:

- #44. Make training dynamic
- #31. Distribute educational materials
- #18. Conduct ongoing training
- #8. Change accreditation or membership requirements
- #11. Change school or community sites
- #21. Create or change credentialing and/or professional development standards

Strategies adapted from Powell et al. (2015)

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Themes

1. Multilevel determinants of successful implementation in schools
2. Setting, policies, and personnel are often not focused on (or familiar with) non-educational interventions (e.g., health)
3. Most determinants are similar to other settings, but may be exacerbated, minimized, or manifest differently
4. Strategies should be carefully selected to match the most critical determinants

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