

EBITE RESOURCE GUIDE

Evaluating Readiness and Capacity for the Cycle of Continuous Improvement

Purpose

The purpose of this guide is to increase educators' awareness of the conditions necessary for successful engagement in the cycle of continuous improvement. The guide includes a checklist that equips educators to evaluate their readiness and capacity, helping them to identify assets as well as factors that need to be strengthened before they invest time and resources in change efforts. A separate resource guide (*Assessing Resource Needs for an Evidence-Based Intervention*) focuses on determining if adequate resources are available for the adoption of a specific intervention.

How to Use this Guide

Use the guide to get an overview of the conditions and structures that a district, school, or implementation team will need to evaluate as they consider engaging in the cycle of continuous improvement. The template provided below can be used to guide a collaborative discussion about current readiness for a successful improvement process. When a readiness evaluation reveals that some components of readiness are lacking, teams may need to build capacity in those areas before embarking on their evidence-based process.

Evaluating Readiness

Readiness and capacity refer to the conditions and structures in place at the district, school, and community levels to support all stages of the cycle of continuous improvement. The consensus, commitment, and coordination of stakeholders is critical to readiness. Readiness and capacity also encompass educators' experience, expertise, knowledge of the community, strong leadership, accessible data systems, and supports for the individuals overseeing and delivering the intervention (e.g., time, consultation, material supports). Evaluation of readiness should occur early in the Identifying Needs and Goals phase of the continuous cycle of improvement. However, it may be necessary to revisit readiness and capacity throughout the improvement cycle as challenges or new resources emerge.

A "continuous improvement leader" should be designated to lead an Improvement Team. This Improvement Team is expected to take responsibility for assessing readiness before proceeding through the continuous improvement cycle. However, the readiness evaluation necessarily involves other stakeholders beyond just the Improvement Team. For example, members of the community, district data personnel, teachers, support staff, and school leaders all have specific knowledge of readiness assets and needs. Attention to culture and context throughout continuous improvement efforts is also a vital ingredient of success.

Are You Ready? Evaluating Readiness and Capacity to Engage in the Cycle of Continuous Improvement

Discuss within the improvement team or a larger group of stakeholders whether the following conditions and structures are in place to support a cycle of continuous improvement. This checklist assumes you are planning a school-level improvement effort that requires some level of support from the district, but it includes indicators that are also relevant for other situations. After your assessment, discuss whether you are adequately prepared. You may not have checked every box, but have you checked more items than you have not? And have you checked items that YOU believe are the most important? Or do you need to build capacity in one or more critical areas before beginning?

Checklist: Selected/Adopted from [REL Toolkit Readiness](#) & [Hexagon Tool Fit and Capacity](#).

	YES
Consensus	
School personnel agree on the need for change.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Relevant district personnel agree on the need for change.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community members and other stakeholders agree on the need for change.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Commitment	
School leaders are committed to supporting change efforts with concrete supports for the improvement team and staff implementing interventions.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Relevant district personnel are committed to supporting change with concrete supports.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Enough school staff are committed to the change effort to make it successful.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Staff are willing to serve on an improvement team, or an existing team is willing to supervise the improvement effort.	<input type="checkbox"/>
The individuals who will be delivering an intervention are committed to the improvement effort.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Collaboration	
There is a culture of collaboration, problem-solving, and openness to learning at the school.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teams of educators at the school consistently work together effectively to support student success.	<input type="checkbox"/>
There is a culture of open communication among district and school leaders and among school leaders and school staff.	<input type="checkbox"/>
There is a culture of open communication among educators and community members.	<input type="checkbox"/>
School and District Capacity	
Academic, attendance, and behavioral outcome data are available.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Data on root causes of outcomes are available, including data on students' perspectives.	<input type="checkbox"/>
The school and/or district has individuals with expertise in analyzing and using data to identify needs and guide the selection of interventions.	<input type="checkbox"/>
School and district staff represent the diversity of students and community members.	<input type="checkbox"/>
School and district staff understand the cultures and histories of community members.	<input type="checkbox"/>
The school and district are aware of current improvement efforts and how a new effort fits in.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Resources

Education Development Center (2019). [Building a Culture of Continuous Improvement: Guidebook and Toolkit](#). Acknowledgement: Shared with the permission of Education Development Center.

Metz, A. & Louison, L. (2018) *The Hexagon Tool: Exploring Context*. Chapel Hill, NC: National Implementation Research Network, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Based on Kiser, Zabel, Zachik, & Smith (2007) and Blase, Kiser & Van Dyke (2013). [Hexagon Tool Fit and Capacity](#)

Shakman, K., Wogan, D., Rodriguez, S., Boyce, J., & Shaver, D. (2020). *Continuous improvement in education: A toolkit for schools and districts* (REL 2021–014). U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Northeast & Islands. <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs>. [REL Toolkit Readiness](#)

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. (2020). [Continuous Improvement Process: Criteria and Rubric](#). Version 1.2 Adopted from the Ohio Department of Education.