![SISEP - State Implementation and Scaling-up of Evidence-based Practices]

Scaling-up Brief
Readiness for Change

Dean Fixsen, Karen Blase, Rob Horner, Barbara Sims, & George Sugai

Introduction

In education "readiness for change" is something that needs to be developed, nurtured, and sustained. Readiness is not a pre-existing condition waiting to be found or an enduring characteristic of a person, organization, or system.

The same person, organization, or system can be in the Full Implementation stage with respect to one innovation and in the Exploration Stage for a different innovation. Accountability for creating readiness rests with the implementation team, not with those are expected or invited to change.

The purpose of this Brief is to define the variables a state or district leadership team may wish to consider as they determine if they are "ready" to invest in the scaling-up of an innovation in education. As defined here, "scaling up" means that at least 60% of the students who could benefit from an innovation have access to that innovation in schools across a State. Creating benefits to students on a comprehensive scale requires considerable change by teachers, building staff, district staff, and state leaders. "Readiness" is defined as a developmental point at which a person, organization, or system has the capacity and willingness to engage in a particular activity. Creating readiness for change is a critical component of both initiating and scaling up the use of evidence-based practices and other innovations in education.

Readiness is an under-emphasized part of the implementation process. Proceeding with implementation prematurely can lead to both ineffective and expensive implementation attempts. In some cases, leadership or management teams within an organization or system have fully explored a "change initiative" and have decided on a course of action. The same leaders and managers then are surprised when collaborators, staff, or colleagues display what some call "resistance to change." "Resistance" occurs when people are asked prematurely to move to action. They are "resistant to change" because they are not "ready for change." However, system leaders cannot simply wait for readiness to appear. We frame below the core elements of assessing and creating readiness and place the role of "readiness for change" in the larger context of implementation stages.

Stages of Implementation

In the Stages of Implementation outlined below, creating readiness for change occurs primarily during the Exploration Stage but is part of the other Stages as well. Keep in mind that the Stages of Implementation are not linear, and that sustainability is embedded in the activities in each Stage over time (e.g., oscillate between Exploration and Installation and Initial Implementation as early attempts to use and support an innovation fail to realize intended benefits). Implementation teams (see Module 3: Implementation Teams) are essential for carrying out the Stages of Implementation effectively and efficiently for a variety of innovations within a State. With their repeated experiences, Implementation Teams become quite skillful at creating readiness within key stakeholder and community groups.

Implementation Stages

Exploration, Installation initial implementation- full implementation
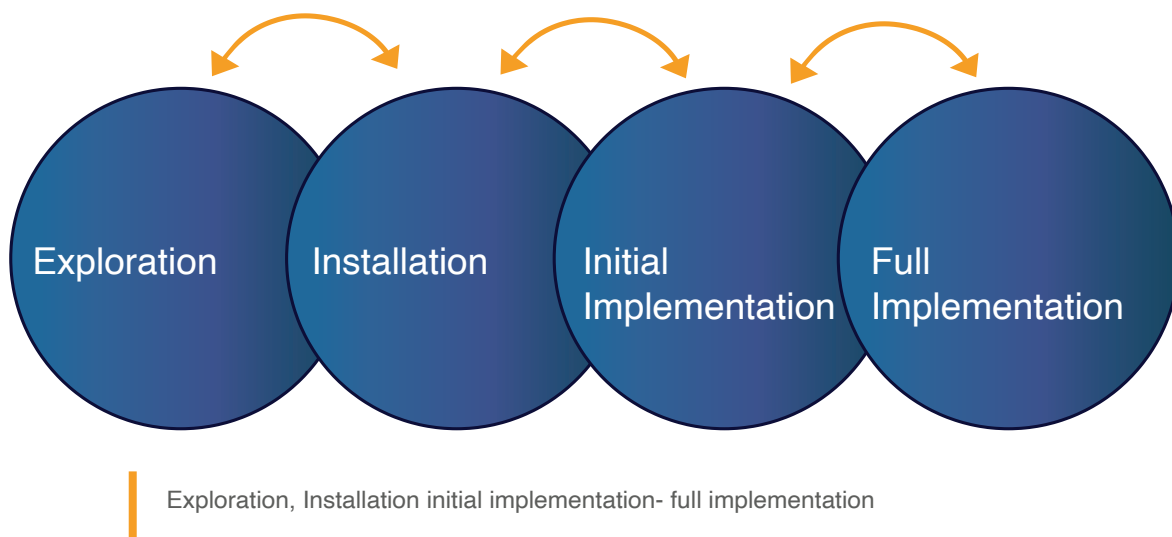
The Stages of Implementation are:

Exploration— identifying the need for change, learning about possible interventions that may be solutions, creating readiness for change, learning about what it takes to implement the innovation effectively, developing stakeholders and champions, deciding to proceed (or not).

Installation— establishing the resources needed to use an innovation and resources required to implement the innovation with fidelity resulting in good outcomes for students

Initial Implementation— the first use of an innovation by educators and others working in a school and district environment that is just learning how to support the new ways of work (sometimes referred to as the "awkward stage")

Full Implementation— the skillful use of an innovation well-integrated into the repertoire of educators and routinely supported by roles, functions, and structures supported by building and district administrations.

As one might expect, Full Implementation may be reached more quickly for some innovations while others take longer. However, 2 to 5 years is a typical time frame to achieve Full Implementation for many science-based interventions and other innovations.

Creating Readiness for Change

Creating "readiness for change" is an active component of the Exploration Stage. During the Exploration Stage, individuals typically need information and time to process what the needs are, and what the innovation or change might mean for them. Encouragement, incentives, or demands to "just do it" typically do not lead to the "action" hoped for by the leaders or management team. What is needed is relevant and detailed information so those who are being asked to change know what is expected, how the process will work, and are "ready" for change.

In education "readiness for change" is something that needs to be developed, nurtured, and sustained. Readiness is not a pre-existing condition waiting to be found or an enduring characteristic of a person, organization or system. The same person, district/school, or state system can be in the Full Implementation stage with respect to one innovation and in the Exploration Stage for a different innovation. Accountability for creating readiness rests with the Implementation Team, not with those who are expected or invited to change.

Creating readiness for scaling up evidence-based practices in education is not a simple matter. Given the breadth, depth, intensity, and duration of the efforts involved in scaling up innovations to reach students in schools statewide, States need to "be ready" along a number of dimensions:

Identification and validation of need
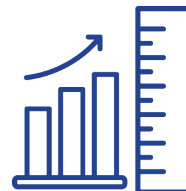
Consideration of required changes

Planning for change

Communication plan

Implementation plan

Data collection and reporting plan

Each of these dimensions is outlined below. The time required to "be ready for change" will vary from State to State and from issue to issue. The support available to States also will impact the time needed to create readiness for change. With skillful guidance from an Implementation Team, creating readiness for change may take only a few months. In other cases, issues may have to persist for several years before they "come to a head" and prompt greater attention to creating readiness for change.

1. **Identification and validation of need.** Scaling up requires recognition of a clear need for comprehensive change. Unless the needs are clear and there is dissatisfaction with the current state of affairs, the State Management Team and major stakeholders will not have sufficient motivation to fully participate in a multi-year process of changing education in classrooms, districts, and overall system functions. A State Management Team may include the Chief State School Officer, Directors of General and Special Education, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Director of Evaluation, and Director of Finance and Administration.

   - The need for change must be important enough and broad enough to merit using the energy and resources that are required for scaling up innovations.
   - The need for change needs to be validated with data or broad consensus in order to stimulate sustained action and track progress toward the intended outcomes.

2. **Consideration of required changes.** The impetus for change can come from any quarter (e.g., disasters, lawsuits, data about current results, data about new possibilities, changes in leadership). Whatever the source of interest in change, State Management Teams and major stakeholders need considerable information about issues, innovations, implementation methods, risks, and benefits in order to contemplate change on a useful scale and to envision a different future.

   - Convening groups at practice, policy, and management levels is an important part of preparing for change. The idea of "requisite variety" is relevant here – that is, greater diversity of roles, functions, and opinions in the room for discussions results in more complete views of "the problem" and better decisions about "the solution."
   - Consideration of alternatives is a key part of getting ready for change. Prioritizing needs and initiatives is very important. Better to do a few things well with good outcomes for students than have multiple under-resourced initiatives that consume all the resources and produce few desirable outcomes.

- Readiness includes consideration of the feasibility of change. The resources need to be available to initiate and sustain implementation supports for an innovation and to create the capacity to expand and sustain the innovation over time. Attempting to use innovations in the absence of adequate implementation supports is a waste of resources and opportunities for improvement.
- In some cases the State Management Team will have encouraged some schools to make use of the innovation to determine whether it can be implemented with fidelity and good outcomes (see "transformation zones" in Module 5: Improvement Cycles). Readiness for scaling-up is enhanced by having practical examples of success available to those considering change.

State leaders should require that any innovation considered for scaling-up provide empirical demonstration of effectiveness. The criterion for documenting impact may vary depending on the innovation and outcome measures, but a general guideline is demonstration of at least a 0.50 "effect size" within an experimental trial (e.g., in general terms, an effect size of 1.00 means that the students who received an innovation achieved two times greater benefit than their counterparts who were in typical classrooms). Scaling up needs to be "worth it" in terms of benefits to students, families, and communities.

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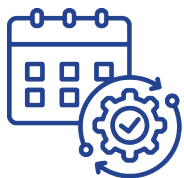
3. **Planning for change.** As the State Management Team and major stakeholders move from Exploration to Installation, readiness for change depends upon the State Management Team having a plan to initiate the change process and a plan for managing the change process once it begins.

- Comprehensive change is fraught with risks. State Management Teams need to anticipate the risks involved and have a plan to manage risks, issues, and surprises that inevitably emerge from the change process (e.g. use of the practice-policy communication cycle).
- Any plan for change should assume that schools have some practices already in place that are valued. Change should supplement what already works, not supplant efforts that are valued, working for some, and hard won. Scaling-up requires a process by which a school team can (1) self-assess core features that are or are not in place, (2) adapt the innovation to fit the local context while retaining the core features, and (3) incorporate implementation investment in sustainability and local capacity at every stage of the process. Implementation Teams are skilled in these areas and are very helpful to integrating initiatives and preparing for scaling up.

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- As part of the Planning dimension, Implementation Teams should provide a "readiness checklist" (e.g. the Hexagon Tool) that can be used by local school/district teams to help guide them in assessing and building readiness. Elements of a readiness checklist will assess if (1) the outcome of an innovation is highly valued, (2) there is consensus that a need exists for the innovation,the innovation is evidence-based and already in use locally, (4) a practical and cost-effective process for implementation is defined, and (5) adequate evaluation tools are available to assess both fidelity and impact.

4. **Communication plan.** A critical component of successful system change is frequent and accurate communication between the practice level and the policy level (see Communication Protocol Worksheet or Module 5: Improvement Cycles). The State Management Team and major stakeholders need to be in a position to quickly adjust policies and regulations to eliminate barriers and strengthen facilitators of change at the teacher, building, district, and bureaucracy levels.

   - Rapid feedback cycles (weekly, monthly communication) allow adjustments to be made to quickly remove risks, detect and correct errors to maximize benefits to students, and to align system structures, roles, and functions to support teachers and building administrators in their use of innovations in education.
   - Adaptive leadership during the comprehensive change process convenes stakeholders at regular intervals regarding the vision, plan, and anticipated results, and to identify issues and concerns that arise.
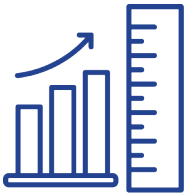
5. **Implementation plan.** The State Management Team and major stakeholders need to be ready to effectively implement desired changes at the classroom, building, district, and bureaucracy levels. Coherent and comprehensive change is not done for its own sake—it is done to bring about and support effective ways of work that improve educational outcomes for students. Few States have an infrastructure for effective implementation of evidence-based programs or other innovations. The State Management Team and major stakeholders in the education system must be prepared to develop this capacity to ensure sustainable system change to support new practices.

   - The District Capacity Assessment and State Capacity Assessment provide indicators of current functioning and generate action plans to help inform and regularly update implementation plans at state and district levels.

Comprehensive implementation strategies need to be in place to effectively and efficiently help teachers and others make use of education innovations to benefit students. This typically means investing in:

- Building local capacity for on-going training,
- Developing and supporting a cadre of coaches who can facilitate full and effective use of innovations in practice
- Organizing a formal plan of evaluation that emphasizes teacher/staff fidelity as well as student outcomes, and
- Regular and repeated professional development experiences for faculty and staff who are engaged in the day-to-day implementation efforts.

6. **Data collection and reporting plan.** The State Management Team and major stakeholders need to be ready to establish reliable, valid, and trusted indicators of progress that are fully accessible to the State Management Team and major stakeholders involved in the comprehensive change process. The data and indicators can reflect incremental changes in benefits to students and others, reductions in critical issues, and benefits to society. The data and indicators also need to include measures of the development of an infrastructure (e.g., trainers, coaches, evaluation system) for implementation.

   - Information and data from the successes and issues raised at the level of implementation of innovations are part of the weekly/ monthly feedback to the State Management Team so they can align system roles and functions to more effectively support the implementation of innovations at the practice levels.
   - Effective scaling-up of educational innovations will require data collection that is directly useful to the local implementers. Self-assessment tools may be linked with more formal external evaluation efforts to allow school, district and state teams to progress monitor their implementation efforts.

Conclusion

Readiness for change is an important consideration in any effort to increase the effective use of evidence-based programs and other innovations in education. Readiness can be assessed, developed, and sustained with thoughtful activities that are sensitive to individuals' needs for relevant information and involvement in decision making. Creating readiness for change applies at all levels, from the State Management Team to teachers and staff and all those in between, and includes major stakeholders in the process as well. The capacity to create readiness for change, manage the change process, implement innovations effectively, and establish reliable and enduring indicators of progress is largely missing in nearly all State education systems. Creating this infrastructure is an essential part of effectively using evidence-based approaches to education and other innovations to benefit students in classrooms across a State. As teachers, staff, administrators, policy makers, and leaders come and go, creating readiness for change is an on-going activity if science-based interventions and other innovations are to be scaled up and sustained to benefit students statewide for decades to come.

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About SISEP

Effective implementation capacity is essential to improving education. The State Implementation & Scaling-up of Evidence-based Practices Center supports education systems in creating implementation capacity for evidence-based practices benefitting students, especially those with disabilities. For more Information visit us on the web at:
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