Effective Implementation Cohort

Context-Specific Readiness Factors to Consider for Implementation of Curriculum

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LEARNING QUESTION 2 OF 4:

- APPLICATION OF ESTABLISHED PRACTICE
- **ENABLING CONTEXTS**
- VARIABILITY IN IMPLEMENTATION
- MEASUREMENT

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The purpose of this resource is to identify context-specific readiness factors that leaders in priority contexts should consider when implementing curriculum. Examples within this document focus specifically on a high-quality middle level math curriculum. Priority contexts for the purpose of the Effective Implementation Cohort are school districts in which populations of students who are Black, Lantino/a, and/or English Learner (EL)-designated students and/or experiencing poverty, are over represented.

The resource is organized into three sections:

1. A brief introduction is provided to support understanding context and its role within implementation.
2. Each of the contextual factors identified from the work of the Effective Implementation Cohort (EIC) are categorized by different domains of context and illustrations are provided.
3. A reflection tool for leaders is also provided to support consideration of these factors for implementation planning.

It should be noted that the context-specific readiness factors identified within this resource are aligned to the overall readiness constructs for implementation within the EIC. Specific readiness constructs are aligned below with each contextual factor.

INTRODUCTION

The *Context and Implementation of Complex Interventions* (CICI) framework defines context as "a set of characteristics and circumstances that consist of active and unique factors, within which the implementation is embedded. As such, context is not a backdrop for implementation, but interacts, influences, modifieds, and facilitates or constrains the intervention and its implementation" (p. 4)[1].

Thus, context interacts with both the high-quality math curriculum and the necessary implementation activities to support the curriculum's use. There are multiple types or domains of contexts to be considered at different stages of implementing the curriculum. Several examples of these contextual domains include:



Political or Socio-Political context is a set of actions and/or dispositions associated with decision-making in groups and other power-related activities among individuals.



Community context is connected to the values, beliefs, history, culture, and relationships or networks among members of a local community.



Organization context is how an agency is set up to accomplish its mission, vision and goals including its organizational principles or core values developed by the people and around which people are organized; clearly communicated goals and direction; and well built systems and structures of support.



Financial context is the availability of funds and resources, as well as the ability to leverage and use funds in various ways, such as braiding or blending.



Learning context is an organization's culture or ability to use data and information for ongoing growth and improvement.

These various types of contexts are dynamic and interdependent. In addition, the context will evolve over time and present differently across multiple levels (e.g., district, school, classroom). Context can also serve as a barrier, an asset, or both within implementation efforts. Keep in mind, because of this active and evolving nature of context, attending to readiness is an ongoing and critical component of implementation success.

CONTEXT READINESS FACTORS

Let's take a deeper look at the contextual factors that impact readiness:



Political Factors

Aligned Readiness Constructs: Communication, Assessing Fit and Feasibility

- Board of education, governing bodies, bargaining units, or labor relations perception and endorsement of math as a needed area of improvement for priority students.
- The establishment of enabling policies for implementation including:
  - a strong curriculum adoption process that involves those implementing the curriculum (teachers, principals, coaches) and intended beneficiaries (students, families, caregivers), and considers factors beyond evidence and need such as fit, capacity, available supports, and usability of the curriculum; and
  - sufficient and prioritized time allocation for professional learning (training and coaching); and
  - data agreements in place to ensure teams have access to data for decision-making purposes.

EXAMPLES

After presenting the current student outcomes in math to the board of education, the district superintendent provided an overview of three potential new curricula that the district math department were reviewing. Per the district adoption process, the Board requested explicit data and research on the curriculum selected by the math department before the official adoptions could occur.

A bargaining unit within a suburban-size local education agency (LEA) restricted the use of a fidelity measure for both use of the curriculum and high-quality teacher practices. As a result, the implementation team lacked information to inform improvements to quality supports and understand students' academic progress.



Community Factors

Aligned Readiness Constructs: Communication, Assessing Fit and Feasibility

- Community demographics, values, beliefs, and needs examined in alignment with the curriculum.
- Community organizations that are in a position to support the implementation of a new curriculum.
- Family and caregiver perception of the compatibility of math curriculum with perceived values and needs.
- Family and caregiver level of engagement with delivery of instruction and opportunities for support.

EXAMPLES

An urban LEA reached out to the area homeless shelter, women support agencies, and community center to ensure that they were in a position to support the math curriculum with students that may be utilizing their facilities.

A rural LEA with a strong social media presence and an actively engaged district leader within the community are leveraged to provide messages regarding math curriculum implementation to reach and engage families and caregivers.



Organizational Factors

Aligned Readiness Constructs: District Teaming, Implementation Planning, Executive Sponsor Engagement, Assessing Fit and Feasibility

- Prioritization of math within the overall district strategic plan/improvement plan and requirement for school improvement plans to have a goal-aligned vision and theory of action for mathematics. Alignment of initiatives to support coherence and resource availability.
- Organizational values of teamwork, the time involved, and complexity of implementation and maintenance of focused attention for implementation over time.
- LEA executive leadership level of authority and positionality, as well as their level of influence and relationships to support prioritization and management of competing initiatives regardless of locale (urban, suburban, or rural).
- Leadership stability at the LEA and school levels maintained despite turnover. When selection of new leadership occurs it is designed to be in alignment with the identified priority (i.e., similar beliefs, values).
- Active support for the creation of building (school level) implementation teams accountable for implementing and monitoring use of curriculum.

EXAMPLES

In winter of 2022, an urban LEA had a change in leadership: a new executive director who also took on the role of an EIC executive sponsor. With this change came a different approach to the EIC project and the math implementation. At the time, the district had two competing initiatives (ELA and the EIC math implementation initiative), each being funded by different sources, being implemented in different schools, and led by different district departments. The new executive director changed the EIC math implementation direction so that the schools involved in the EIC would be the same as the ones involved in the ELA initiative and that the district departments would collaborate to determine how to align the implementation practices.



FINANCIAL FACTORS

Aligned Readiness Constructs: Implementation Planning, Assessing Fit and Feasibility

- Ability to braid and/or blend funds available from different sources and units to support implementation.
- Allocation of resources for specific implementation activities.

EXAMPLES

Per a statewide requirement, an urban district developed an improvement and accountability plan to outline and report how funds are distributed. This district also created a guiding document to communicate their funding model and information to parents and caregivers with specific attention to how funds are allocated for priority students such as English Learners and students living below poverty.

District reviewed their budget and aligned the EIC project with available fund sources. Beyond the project funding, the district is planning to use Title II funds for sustained professional development, state funding for textbooks, and ESSR and Title I funds to support implementation.



LEARNING FACTORS

Aligned Readiness Constructs: Implementation Plan, Measurement, Communication

- Creation of a clear data decision making structure including who is involved, data to be reviewed, timeline, and communication of decisions.

EXAMPLES

Extensive turnover has become a common event in districts across the country. One urban LEA addressed this by practicing the pause. They took time to ensure that the executive sponsor, coordinator and champions were all on the same page regarding who was involved in the project, who needed to be involved in the project and the background and requirements for the grant. Additionally, data was reviewed and timelines were considered regarding next steps. The LEA practiced the pause for the first semester and by January they were ready to begin their District Implementation Team meetings to support implementation.

CONTEXT SPECIFIC READINESS REFLECTION TOOL

Reflection Tool Guidance: This tool is designed to help district leaders and teams reflect on their current level of readiness and what specific contextual factors they may need to address. The process is designed to have open conversations on the reflections, provide an opportunity for teams to designate a rating and create action steps based on their conversation of each contextual factor. It is recommended that teams come to consensus as to what the desired rating is for each factor before moving forward to implementation.



Political

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What key players or groups need to be approached regarding the need?

Do you need to engage your board of education or charter management company?

Are there bargaining units that need to be brought into the conversation?

What policies or procedures are in place within your district that would enable implementation? Are there policies that would create barriers and need to be reviewed?

Has your district examined or reviewed policies and procedures impacting implementation through an equity audit or utilizing an equity lens?

REFLECTION RATING

How would you currently rate your readiness for implementation when thinking about your political context? (1 not ready - 4 ready)

1	2	3	4
NOT READY			READY

ACTION PLANNING

What action steps do you need to take to improve your political context to be ready for implementation?

Community

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Does the community at large recognize the need? Have you collected feedback regarding their values and perceptions?

What community organizations are in the area that the adoption of a new curriculum may impact? Do they have the capacity to assist?

How can you collect data regarding the families and caregivers engagement level in instruction and support opportunities?

REFLECTION RATING

How would you currently rate your readiness for implementation when thinking about your community context? (1 not ready - 4 ready)

1 NOT READY — 2 — 3 — 4 READY

ACTION PLANNING

What action steps do you need to take to improve your community context to be ready for implementation?

Organizational

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Is the need a priority for the district? Does a vision and a theory of action exist to address the need?

Is there alignment of initiatives to support coherence and resource availability (aka initiative inventory)?

Does the organization have a culture to support long-term focus and work?

Does executive leadership have the needed level of authority and positionality or influence/ relationships to support prioritization and management of competing initiatives?

When selecting new leaders for the district, is the process designed around the needs, vision, and focus of the organization?

Is there a structure in place to support the development of district and building level implementation teams?

REFLECTION RATING

How would you currently rate your readiness for implementation when thinking about your organizational context? (1 not ready - 4 ready)

1	2	3	4
NOT READY			READY

ACTION PLANNING

What action steps do you need to take to improve your organizational context to be ready for implementation?

Financial

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What resources are currently available to support implementation activities?

Is there the ability to braid and/or blend funds from different sources & units to support implementation?

Is there a focus on long-term or stable funding sources to sustain implementation?

REFLECTION RATING

How would you currently rate your readiness for implementation when thinking about your financial context? (1 not ready - 4 ready)

1 NOT READY — 2 — 3 — 4 READY

ACTION PLANNING

What action steps do you need to take to improve your financial context to be ready for implementation?

Learning

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Is there a clear data driven decision making structure for who is involved, what data should be collected, reviewed, and communicated?

Does the collected data represent capacity, implementation, and outcome data?

REFLECTION RATING

How would you currently rate your readiness for implementation when thinking about your learning context? (1 not ready - 4 ready)

1 NOT READY — 2 — 3 — 4 READY

ACTION PLANNING

What action steps do you need to take to improve your learning context to be ready for implementation?

References

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