

Assess Readiness to Benefit Overview

Overview of the Initial Readiness Stage

Staff members have varying levels of capacity or “readiness” to engage in school improvement planning. Most likely, some staff members are ready and willing and some staff members are much less willing and able. This disparity can affect the quality of the entire planning process. Determining readiness to benefit is not a onetime event because readiness levels can change depending on the task at hand. The Leadership Team must be vigilant in their understanding of stakeholder readiness and adjust strategies and activities based on the abilities and willingness of the constituents at each stage and for each activity. *Some first steps that promote the abilities and willingness of staff are:*

- Effective processes for conducting meetings
- Clear understanding of how decisions are made
- Decision-making strategies for working toward consensus
- Time to meet and resources for supporting this work
- Open communication and trust among staff
- District support and understanding of school improvement planning

Readiness

Is there a need and agreement among stakeholders that school improvement planning should take place? Has the principal initiated conversations with staff to let them know that a significant process must occur? Is the principal going to facilitate the process with the help of the Leadership Team, or has an outside Capacity Builder (CB) who is identified to help get the process going? These are all factors that set the stage for creating a plan for school improvement. See the [*Assess Readiness to Benefit: General Readiness Worksheet*](#).

Outcomes

The entire school staff, in collaboration with students, parents, and community stakeholders, will have a clearer picture of what it will take to go through the eight stages of the school improvement process. The appropriate foundation for school improvement planning will be in place (e.g., Leadership Team, district buy-in, and accepted mission statement).

Who Should Be Involved?

Principal, district staff, a Leadership Team that reflects the diversity of student population, the full staff, parent(s), students, and community members as appropriate.

How Much Time is Needed for This Stage?

2 to 4 weeks for the initial stage (see on-going readiness activities at each stage).

Process

1. **Make contact with district.** The principal discusses the school improvement process with district staff to ensure the district supports the effort, time, and resources that will be spent on the process. The principal contacts other appropriate resources for support and guidance.
2. **Increase staff awareness.** In a staff meeting, let them know: 1) reasons for embarking on a school improvement effort; 2) it is a guided eight-stage process; 3) the input of all staff will be needed; 4) there will be a representative Leadership Team in place that will meet, plan, and share information back with full staff; and 5) they should expect to be challenged.

3. **Put together a Leadership Team.** The team should include a representative cross-section of the teaching staff (not the entire English department, or just the primary teachers), a paraprofessional, and a parent and/or community member. Both genders and the diversity of the students and community must be taken into consideration. If it is a secondary school, students can also be incorporated into the Leadership Team.
4. **Have a Leadership Team meeting.** See *Leadership Team Sample Agenda - Assess Readiness to Benefit – Step One*. The first meeting is an important time to set the tone and expectations for the Leadership Team. Like the first days of teaching, it's best to be very explicit and intentional about expectations and processes right away!
5. **Leadership team conducts General Readiness Assessment.** See *Assess Readiness to Benefit: General Readiness Worksheet*. The Leadership Team will spend about 30 to 60 minutes discussing the readiness of staff to engage in the process of school improvement planning. Other activities at this meeting include planning for the next full staff meeting.
6. **Have a full staff meeting.** Take 30 to 60 minutes to acquaint staff with the eight stages of school improvement and lay the groundwork for their involvement. Also introduce the *Nine Characteristics of High Performing Schools* and use the *Nine Characteristics Jigsaw Puzzle* to further process the basic concepts associated with each characteristic.
7. **Have second Leadership Team meeting.** Bring the Leadership Team together again to plan for the next faculty meeting. See *Leadership Team Meeting Sample Agenda - Assess Readiness to Benefit – Step Two*. The focus of this meeting is to explore common understandings regarding beliefs, vision, and mission of the school and to begin looking at the use of data in preparation of the next stage.
8. **Reconvene full faculty.** Some activities for building common understanding are suggested. Refer to the activities related to beliefs, vision, and mission statements.
 - *Beliefs, Vision, and Mission: Creating a Clear & Shared Focus*
 - *Unpacking the Mission Statement*
 - *Unpacking OUR Mission Statement*
 - *Invent a New Mission Statement*

Cautions

Readiness Assessment is not a one-time event! The Leadership Team must constantly assess the readiness levels of constituents to engage in each stage of the planning process and adjust leadership strategies accordingly. You may be tempted to skip the “fun” stuff and get right to work. Don't! It's the conversation and thinking that build the readiness and capacity for staff to make the kind of changes in practice that truly affect student outcomes.

Resources

- *Assess Readiness to Benefit: General Readiness Worksheet*
- *Leadership Team Sample Agenda - Assess Readiness to Benefit - Step One*
- *Leadership Team Sample Agenda - Assess Readiness to Benefit - Step Two*
- *9 Characteristics of High Performing Schools*
- *9 Characteristics of High Performing Schools Jigsaw Puzzle*
- *Planning Calendar*