

Leading implementation

How ready are we?

Preparing to start an implementation effort

September 2026

This practice resource helps school leaders reflect on their school's preparedness to start an implementation effort and then decide next steps.

Introduction

Successful implementation of evidence-based teaching practices is key to maximising student learning outcomes. It also relies on deliberate planning, adequate resourcing and ongoing commitment.

To determine how ready your school is to start an implementation process, it's useful to ask 2 overarching questions:

- Is your school **willing** to make a change?
- Does your school currently have the **capacity** to do so?¹

Willingness for change considers staff's collective motivation or commitment to improve the use of an evidence-based teaching practice. Capacity for change considers the people, resources, structures and processes needed to successfully implement a practice.²

The rest of this practice resource prompts you to reflect on key themes influencing your school's willingness and capacity to begin implementation. It also provides guidance on the next steps your leadership team can take to either start or get ready for implementation. As a leader, you could go through this exercise individually or use it to generate discussion among your leadership team.

Checking how ready we are to start

Step 1. Consider key themes

Table 1 outlines themes relevant to willingness and capacity for beginning implementation. Read each statement in the table. For each theme, mark whether you think your school is currently in the 'More ready' or 'Less ready' column. These aren't strict categories, so select the options you think best describe the current context in your school.

Table 1: Themes to help determine whether your school is in a good position to start an implementation effort

Theme	More ready	Less ready
Our school has stable leadership to guide a change	Our school leadership team is relatively stable.	Our school is in the middle of, or will soon undergo, significant changes to leadership positions and structures.
Our school has sufficient leadership capacity to lead implementation	Our school has leaders with sufficient skills, resources and availability to lead an implementation effort.	Our school is facing challenges to leadership capacity that are likely to take some time to work through.
Our school has a clear and shared direction	Our leaders have (or are developing) a shared vision for what our school is aiming to achieve.	Our school doesn't currently have a clear vision or shared strategic direction, and this may make it difficult to build support for an implementation effort.
Leaders believe it's necessary to make a change	Our leaders generally recognise that teaching practices could be enhanced to improve student outcomes.	Our leaders generally don't recognise that student outcomes could be improved by strengthening teacher practices across the school.
Leaders can make change a priority	If necessary, our leaders can prune competing initiatives to make the implementation effort a priority.	Our school has many competing priorities. Leaders are unsure of how they could fit in something new right now.
Leaders can enable the structures and processes needed to support change	Our school can allocate resources to strengthening implementation leadership and teaching capacity (e.g., by developing an implementation team and developing modelling and coaching structures).	Currently, we have very few or no staff available who could lead implementation and build teaching capacity through modelling and coaching.

Theme	More ready	Less ready
Staff are open to working together	In our school, most teachers feel safe to learn from and collaborate with colleagues and school leaders.	Our school culture, structures or processes mean most staff tend to work individually and may be less open to learning together.
Our school isn't facing other significant issues	There aren't any insurmountable barriers impacting on day-to-day school operations and functioning.	Our school has recently experienced, or is experiencing, significant events disrupting day-to-day school operations and functioning (e.g., a recent or upcoming school merger, ongoing natural disaster or community tragedy).

Step 2. Weigh up key themes

Review your responses for each option in [Table 1](#). Decide, on balance, how ready your school is to start an implementation effort.

- If most of your responses are in the **'More ready'** column, then your school's likely in a good position to start implementing an evidence-based teaching practice. It's fine if, for some themes, you marked the 'Less ready' column. You can continue to address any needs you've identified during the early stages of implementation.
- If most of your responses are in the **'Less ready'** column, then it may be useful to hold off starting a new implementation effort (perhaps for a short time) while your school works to increase willingness or capacity for implementation. If you need to start a new implementation effort immediately, prioritise addressing the aspects of willingness or capacity you identified as needing attention in the [early stages of implementation](#).

Planning next steps

If your school is **ready to start** an implementation effort, your leadership team could:

1. Complete the 10-to-15-minute microcourse, [Achieving Lasting Change](#), for a quick overview of what it looks like to use a deliberate and structured approach to implementation.
2. Read [Guidance for Principals: Supporting a Deliberate and Structured Approach to Implementation](#), which outlines implementation leadership tips from principals that are backed by research.
3. With your leadership team, complete the [Implementation for Impact: A Deliberate and Structured Approach](#) module to introduce key implementation concepts.
4. Go to the Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO)'s [collection of practical resources](#) for guidance and advice on how to get started in the early Explore stage of implementation. A key first step is forming a school implementation team.

If your school needs to pause or take **further steps to get ready**, your leadership team could:

1. Either complete the 10-to-15-minute microcourse, [Achieving Lasting Change](#), or read the explainer, [Taking an Evidence-Informed Approach to Implementation](#), to gain a quick overview of what it looks like to use a deliberate and structured approach to implementation.
2. Read AERO's report on [how students learn best](#) to understand the value of using evidence-based teaching practices.
3. Work on key aspects of willingness or capacity that you identified in [Table 1](#) as needing strengthening (e.g., building more stable leadership, pruning competing initiatives or highlighting the need for improving teaching practices).
4. Go to AERO's [collection of practical resources](#) when your school is more ready to start an implementation effort.

About this resource

This resource is informed by insights from AERO's work with schools through the [Learning Partner project](#), as well as key implementation science literature.

This resource focuses on the decision to start an implementation effort for improving teaching at a whole-school level (or at least among one or more teaching teams). It's not specific to any particular evidence-based teaching practice – selecting a practice will be one of the early decisions you can make if you decide now is a good time to start.

Aspects of willingness and capacity continue to be relevant once you've begun implementing an evidence-based teaching practice but they can be considered later through tracking a range of [enablers and barriers](#).



Endnotes

- 1 Scaccia, J. P., Cook, B. S., Lamont, A., Wandersman, A., Castellow, J., Katz, J., & Beidas, R. S. (2015). A practical implementation science heuristic for organizational readiness: $R = MC^2$. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 43(4), 484–501. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.21698>
- 2 Capacity for change also considers the people, knowledge, skills and climate needed to successfully implement a *specific* practice (Scaccia et al., 2015). You will reflect on these factors later in your implementation effort, after you have selected an evidence-based teaching practice to implement.