

PURPOSE

You have identified an evidence-based intervention¹ that may meet your needs, but you are not sure if it will fit your context. When determining if an evidence-based intervention is worth further review, state and local education agencies can find it useful to think through how contextual factors may influence its fit. To help in that process, this document identifies seven contextual factors, each with related questions. Considering these factors helps decision-makers assess how a particular intervention might meet their needs, regardless of where the evidence of its effectiveness was generated and helps inform further investigation into the feasibility of its implementation in your context.

INTENDED USE

This document may be especially useful for districts and schools that tend not to see themselves represented in the research literature related to the effectiveness of interventions. This group of districts and schools includes, for example, those in rural communities and those serving indigenous populations.

This tool assumes that, prior to using it, you have engaged in a comprehensive analysis of needs, identified interventions to address those needs, and would like to further narrow the promising options for more intensive review (see the additional resources at the end of this document).

It is likely that as you examine interventions, there will be pluses and minuses to each one. This tool is designed to frame conversations about considerations of fit, but does not provide a formula to weigh those pluses and minuses. Instead, this tool helps you identify which interventions you would like to further examine for potential use in your setting.



Contextual Factors

Research alignment to outcome of interest and student population



Considerations and Questions

KEY CONSIDERATION: In research studies of the intervention, was the intervention successful in schools that are similar to the schools you seek to assist?

- » How closely aligned is the outcome that was studied with your outcome of interest?
- » Is the evidence supporting the effectiveness of the intervention based on research that was conducted with a student population similar to yours (e.g., grade level, family income level, race/ethnicity, English learner students, students with disabilities)?
- » If your student demographics are dissimilar from those in the study, how might that difference influence implementation of the intervention?

Contextual Factors

Considerations and Questions

Staffing availability

KEY CONSIDERATION: Is the intervention feasible given the staffing availability in your schools?

- » Does anything about the intervention require a particular staff-to-student ratio, number of staff, or time commitment for staff?
- » How does the staff-to-student ratio, staff number, or staff time commitment called for in the intervention compare to the staffing in your schools?
- » Given what you know about the intervention and the role of staff in its implementation, do you think you have the staffing availability to carry it out?

Access to technology and connectivity

KEY CONSIDERATION: Is the intervention feasible given the current or planned technology and connectivity in your schools?

- » Does the intervention require technology and connectivity? Would lack of this technology or connectivity make the intervention unworkable?
- » How does the technology and connectivity required compare to what is available in your schools? Would you have the budget for any necessary upgrades?
- » Is there adequate staffing support for maintenance and troubleshooting of the technology?

Potential for family engagement

KEY CONSIDERATION: Does the intervention reflect the type of family involvement that is feasible/desired in your schools?

- » How much does the intervention depend on family involvement, at home and/or at school? Does the intervention honor and reflect family structures in the community?
- » To what extent are families able to be involved in the intervention?



Contextual Factors



Considerations and Questions

Professional development

KEY CONSIDERATION: Is there adequate access to the professional development needed for this intervention?

- » To what extent must specific professional development providers be involved in the intervention?
- » To what extent are these providers — or providers with similar expertise — available to assist schools in your state or district?
- » Is there adequate professional development to effectively implement?
- » Is there flexibility in how professional development related to this intervention is delivered?
- » Does the professional development offered for the intervention fit with your district/school professional learning approach?

Importance of community leaders (e.g., elders)

KEY CONSIDERATION: Does the intervention offer opportunities to build on the strengths of leaders in your community?

- » To what extent does the intervention draw on the expertise of community leaders (e.g., elders) and their roles in the community?
- » To what extent would your schools benefit from drawing on the expertise of community leaders to support the intervention?

Travel time to and from school

KEY CONSIDERATION: Can your schools' transportation plans support the intervention, as needed?

- » Does the intervention rely on students being at school before or beyond the typical school day and, thus, require changes in the district- or school-provided transportation?
- » Can the necessary transportation to and from school be made available?

Notes, comments, and ideas

Think about which choice below most closely matches your conclusion based on your review of contextual factors, key considerations, and related questions. Given your selection, what are your next steps related to this intervention?

This intervention is viable in our context. However, we may still need to do further review of one or more aspects of the intervention to make a final determination.

This intervention may be viable in our context. We definitely will need to do further review of one or more aspects of the intervention before making a final determination.

This intervention does not appear to be viable in our context.

Additional resources that may be of interest to complement this tool include:

TOOL 6: COMPARING EVIDENCE-BASED INTERVENTIONS FOUND IN EVIDENCE-BASED IMPROVEMENT: A GUIDE FOR STATES TO STRENGTHEN THEIR FRAMEWORKS AND SUPPORTS ALIGNED TO THE EVIDENCE REQUIREMENTS OF ESSA. This tool helps to identify the feasibility of implementing an intervention in a local context.

Available at: <https://www.wested.org/resources/evidence-based-improvement-essa-guide-for-states/>

CORE INTERVENTION COMPONENTS — Identifying and operationalizing what makes programs work, this research brief discusses how to discern which elements of an intervention are “critical core components” and which elements may be adapted without compromising an intervention’s outcomes.

Available at: <https://aspe.hhs.gov/report/core-intervention-components-identifying-and-operationalizing-what-makes-programs-work>

THE HEXAGON: AN EXPLORATION TOOL — This tool, with adaptations available for education settings, offers an in-depth review process with multiple aspects to consider about an intervention before its adoption.

Available at: <https://nirn.fpg.unc.edu/resources/hexagon-exploration-tool>

¹ The term “interventions” is used to indicate strategies, practices, programs, curricula, policies, etc. as defined by the Every Student Succeeds Act. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/senate-bill/1177/text>