

Readiness and Capacity Building

Support to build sufficient capacity for successful implementation.



Stage 1. Getting Ready

Step 1.2: Assess readiness and build capacity for implementation

This toolkit is designed to support school Wellbeing Teams to assess and strengthen their school's readiness to implement a whole-school approach to wellbeing and bullying prevention.

Schools that assess and improve capacity to implement strategies to improve student wellbeing, develop social skills and reduce bullying are more likely to ensure their actions are effective, sustainable and system wide. Sufficient leadership, organisational support, resources, and strategy compatibility with school needs are crucial to optimise impact.

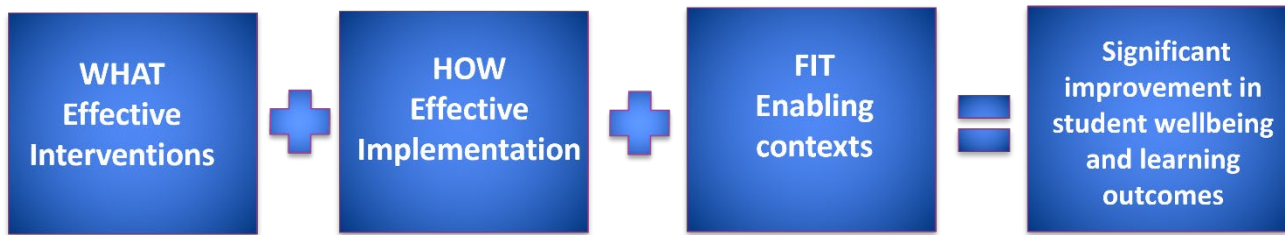


Contents

Introduction to readiness and capacity building.....	1
Positive change in Schools	1
Defining Implementation	2
What does it mean to implement a whole-school approach?	2
Defining Readiness	2
What does it mean to be ready to implement a whole-school approach?	2
Defining Capacity Building	3
What does it mean to be ready to build capacity?	3
Friendly Schools Capacity Building.....	4
How does 'Friendly Schools' help you to build readiness and capacity to implement?	4
Friendly Schools implementation process.....	4
Capacity building and alignment with whole-school vision	5
Capacity building across the stages of implementation.....	5
Tools for support	6
Timeline for implementation	6
When do you start to see results?	6
Assessing School Readiness	7
Assessment Tools	7
School Readiness Check - Short Version	7
School Readiness Check Items – long version - manual	7
How to conduct the School Readiness Check	8
How your school can use the readiness information	8
Building Capacity for Implementation.....	9
Key success factors from schools	9
Four key drivers to build school readiness.....	9
1. Committed and engaged leadership.	10
2. Planning for organisational support and resources	11
4. Staff knowledge, and skills and motivation	14
5. Compatibility with the school needs	15
Capacity building outcomes	16
References	17

Introduction to readiness and capacity building

The success of any reform, whether it is a new literacy, numeracy or wellbeing strategy, is dependent not only on the strategies or practices but how well they are implemented. Even if the practices are evidence-based and found to be effective, it is not sufficient to ensure positive outcomes for students in every school. The “what” (program activities), plus strategies that support “how” these activities will be implemented, plus the enabling contexts of the school “Fit”, increases the chance of positive and sustainable outcomes for students.



(National Implementation Research Network, 2012)

Because schools are complex systems, positive change to support effective implementation of a program usually requires a whole-school approach that is delivered in sufficient quantity to students, staff and parents.

Positive change in Schools

A leading expert on educational change, Michael Fullan, states the three basics of school priority and educational change should be numeracy, literacy and wellbeing¹. While it is well known that healthy students learn better, student wellbeing is seldom given the same priority as other educational areas. When schools take on programs such as Friendly Schools, they are not only achieving objectives that aim to enhance student wellbeing but also student learning for numeracy and literacy. Whereas classroom learning activities specifically target student social and emotional skills which in turn reduce student bullying behaviours, whole-school prevention strategies usually involve broad activities that enhance wellbeing, safety, pastoral care and build a supportive school culture.

Fullan also states that successful educational change is based on the improvements of relationships¹. Building positive relationships between students, between staff and students, and between staff members is crucial not only in achieving change that is supported by everyone, but a school culture that is positive, inclusive, supports, positive wellbeing and does not tolerate bullying behaviours.

Lastly, Fullan argues that the way to successfully engage and motivate the school community to participate in change is through capacity building¹. Fullan describes capacity building as a powerful, actionable concept that includes a “policy, strategy, or action taken that increases the collective efficacy of a group to improve student learning through new knowledge, enhanced resources, and greater motivation on the part of the people working individually and together”¹. He suggests that the balance between assessment and capacity building has not been achieved, indicating too much emphasis has been placed on standards and assessments and less on action in real contexts¹. While schools are aware of the need to adopt evidence-based practices that improve wellbeing and prevent bullying, many are faced with insufficient capacity in terms of resources, teacher training and systematic support, to ensure they are implemented successfully^{2,3}. Even when a school chooses an evidence-based program like Friendly Schools, they are often not implemented with sufficient fidelity to ensure success⁴⁻⁶ and furthermore, not sufficiently sustained to positively influence student and parent outcomes⁷. Hence recommendations to improve the effectiveness of these interventions in schools are largely focused on implementation and sustainability issues⁸.

Defining Implementation

What does it mean to implement a whole-school approach?

Implementation is defined as “a specified set of activities designed to put into practice an approach or program of known dimensions”⁹. The known dimensions of an approach or program may be new curriculum, new policy or changes to classroom management. Activities that aim to build the capacity of staff to implement these activities might be professional learning for staff, additional resources such as time for staff to plan for the new activities, and assessment of how compatible the new practices are working within existing structures. There are many factors that can influence the effectiveness of the implementation process.

1. Intervention characteristics

Intervention source, evidence of strength and quality, relative advantage over what was done before, adaptability, trialability, complexity, design, quality and packaging and cost of the intervention.

2. Outer setting

Extent to which school needs, as well as the barriers and facilitators in meeting those needs, are known and prioritised within the school, degree to which school is networked to external organisations; competitive pressure to implement an intervention and external policies and incentives.

3. Inner setting

Structural characteristics such as size, maturity and social architecture of a school; quality of formal and informal communications within the school; school culture, norms and values; and implementation climate such as the shared receptivity of involved individuals to an intervention.

4. Characteristics of individuals involved.

Knowledge and beliefs about the intervention; self-efficacy to believe they can execute the course of action to achieve implementation goals; individual stage of change in progressing skills and use of the intervention; individual identification and commitment to their school; and other personal attributes such as values, motivation, capacity and competence.

Defining Readiness

What does it mean to be ready to implement a whole-school approach?

Whole-school wellbeing approaches require not only successful implementation to be effective, but also sufficient capacity to enable this implementation. A stage of planning and getting ready may seem obvious, but too often is overlooked. New programs or practices are often unsuccessful due to insufficient preparation, planning, time, and resources being allocated to allow for a framework for success to be established.

Readiness can be defined as a school’s capacity to implement evidence-based interventions effectively.¹⁰

Although staff motivation is important when implementing a new program or practice, it is not enough. A balance of general organisational capacity and intervention-specific capacity is also needed¹¹.

Examples of general organisational capacities are the school’s implementation climate and openness to change, leadership engagement, allocation of resources and staffing structures. Examples of intervention-specific capacities are staff skills, a champion for the new intervention and strength of relationships needed to implement intervention components e.g. between teachers and specialist support staff.

The practical importance of measuring a school’s level of readiness, is to tailor implementation and capacity building supports strategically to ensure precious staff time and school resources are not wasted and ultimately increase the effectiveness of intended wellbeing and learning outcomes for students.

Schools are already doing a lot to address the behaviour, mental health and wellbeing of their students so they can engage and learn well. However, these efforts are often fragmented or reactive as staff face many competing priorities and pressures in their busy day-to-day school life. No matter how enthusiastic staff are about adopting new programs or practices, other pressing needs or lack of organisational capacity can affect implementation and positive progress. Research from over 500 intervention studies aiming to improve the social and emotional wellbeing and development of young people shows that ‘implementation matters’ and significantly affects outcomes – students cannot benefit from something they do not receive.¹²

Many influencing factors have been identified including internal school factors such as structures and climate, external school factors such as wider education system policies and priorities, individual characteristics such as staff self-efficacy and attitudes, as well as characteristics of the intervention itself such as its complexity.^{13,14,15,16} Importantly, these factors can vary across school contexts, for example, the level of staff knowledge, skills or preferences may present a barrier for one school but not for another.^{17, 18,19}

Many of these factors are evident before a school even decides to adopt and implement a new approach or practice. An intentional focus on **'getting ready'** before implementation and addressing these factors can lead to improvements in staff capacity to support quality implementation and the effectiveness of wellbeing interventions.^{20,21.}

Defining Capacity Building

What does it mean to be ready to build capacity?

School wellbeing interventions require not only successful implementation to be effective, but also sufficient capacity to enable this implementation. A stage of planning and getting ready may seem obvious, but too often is overlooked. New programs or practices are often unsuccessful due to insufficient planning, time and resources being allocated to allow for a framework for success to be established.

Friendly Schools research studies conducted by Telethon Kids Institute identified key features of schools who have successfully built their capacity and implemented a whole-school approach and actions to improve wellbeing including:

- a committed and engaged principal and leadership team.
- key staff and students who act as “knowledge brokers”.
- allocated resources such as staff time and evidence-based tools.
- system support in terms of policies, procedures, and structures
- regular staff professional learning
- compatibility with school community needs
- collaborative partnerships with parents, agencies, and wider community.²²



Friendly Schools Capacity Building

How does 'Friendly Schools' help you to build readiness and capacity to implement?

The Friendly Schools whole-school approach is designed to build sustainability and be adaptive to the priorities and specific needs of each school community. It uses a step-by-step planning approach that is data driven to help school teams understand their needs, what's working well or not and what else is needed to intervene on a range of school modifiable risk and protective factors.

A whole-school approach requires a coordinating team of staff to step through a school improvement cycle to assess, plan, implement and evaluate actions overtime that engages staff and builds their capacity. A whole-school approach involves both effective interventions (programs and practices) and effective implementation (improvement processes and capacity building) to make a real difference to students' wellbeing and learning.

Friendly Schools implementation process

Friendly Schools uses a five-stage implementation process designed to support school coordinating teams in implementing this whole-school approach. It follows a quality improvement cycle, linking all the stages of implementation to support systematic change.

Each stage is broken down into step-by-step actions to:

1. **Get ready** - Build readiness and understanding for successful implementation.
2. **Explore strengths and needs** - Explore your current practice, strengths and needs, against the key elements for practice.
3. **Plan for improvement** - Identify and plan your recommended strategies for improvement from the evidence.
4. **Implement plan** - Strengthen capacity of staff to implement your improvement plan.
5. **Reflect and review** - your actions and implementation process for each cycle of improvement.



Capacity building and alignment with whole-school vision

Friendly Schools recognises the need for schools to surround their steps for implementation with high quality evidence for practice (blue outer layer) and strong supports for capacity building and sustainability (white layer) at every stage of the process. The FS Team Guide has embedded tools and supports and embeds capacity building strategies at every stage of your implementation.

Each school is different with its own unique contexts, strengths and needs. The evidence and the program need to be compatible with the school's current vision for its students, staff and community. Friendly Schools tools and processes help you to align the evidence for improving wellbeing and preventing bullying with your schools individual setting and needs.



Capacity building across the stages of implementation

Stage 1: Get ready - Build readiness and understanding for successful implementation.	
<p>Capacity Aim: To build the infrastructure and capacity needed to create an enabling environment to support change</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build leadership capacity through your implementation team. • Learn about implementation and capacity building. • Assess school system readiness and staff feelings of readiness. • Identify implementation barriers and match strategies to build capacity. • Train staff in the core components with initial training, follow-up coaching and ongoing peer collaboration support.
Stage 2: Explore strengths and needs	
<p>Capacity Aim: To define current strengths, needs. To assess compatibility, fit and feasibility to school needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore school strengths and needs using local data – mapping, surveys. • Celebrate successes and strengths. • Specify focus areas for improvement - is it amenable to change? • Match interventions proven to work – can some practices go? • Identify well defined core components of practice – what can be adapted?
Stage 3: Plan for improvement - Explore your current practice, strengths and needs	
<p>Capacity Aim: To plan a step-by-step, achievable plan of actions for improvement over time.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop your action plan and execute it in stages. • Ask -Is it useable - practical for schools in delivery time and capacity? • Ask - Have we built the capacity of our staff to implement our plan? • Plan to scale the intervention efforts from the outset and treat it as a new process with potential new barriers.
Stage 4: Implement plan - Strengthen capacity of staff to implement your improvement plan.	
<p>Capacity Aim: To support staff as they trial the strategies and curriculum for the first time.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt an ongoing capacity building approach for staff. • Follow up support with staff –sharing, coaching. and mentoring. • Encourage staff to embed the strategies into successful current practice and align with the needs of students. • Make adaptations once the core components are securely understood.
Stage 5: Reflect and review – Review processes and actions for each cycle of improvement	
<p>Capacity Aim To plan for ongoing improvement and sustainability and continually learn from and nurture the process.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and improve skills and capacity building activities. • Review the process of implementation and capacity building not just the outcomes. • Be ready to evaluate expected outcomes! • Continuously reward good implementation practice

Tools for support

Friendly Schools provides all the tools you need to build and implement your plan for improvement. At each stage of implementation, the Team Guide leads your team to valuable resources such as, data gathering tools, practice review tools, staff capacity building resources, advice from schools and other resources to support your actions.

These tools provide you with the advice and information you need to make informed decisions about how to implement the Friendly Schools initiative in your school.



Timeline for implementation

When do you start to see results?

Successful implementation takes time.

Although a timeline for implementation and evidence of the program benefits depends largely upon the stage at which the school started, 3–5 years is a realistic timeline based on the experience of schools involved in the previous research projects. Feedback from these schools suggests that the first year is spent in readiness and capacity building and policy development and the second year focuses on the implementation and promotion of the program.

The next few years are focussed on sustaining the program strategies and reviewing and adjusting the program according to the school environment and the success of the strategies. Although the program should not need the intensive time required at the start of the program, review of bullying reduction strategies within the school must be carried out each year.



Assessing School Readiness

The practical importance of measuring a school's level of readiness, is to tailor implementation and capacity building supports strategically to ensure precious staff time and school resources are not wasted and ultimately increase the effectiveness of intended wellbeing and learning outcomes for students.

Schools that assess their readiness and improve capacity support are more likely to ensure their actions are effective, sustainable and system wide. The 'School Readiness Check' will provide your school wellbeing team with an understanding about factors that may influence the successful implementation of a whole-school approach to wellbeing. This 'check' will help determine what steps are needed to address potential implementation barriers or strengthen implementation capacity. It may also serve as a useful reflection tool to track progress over time.

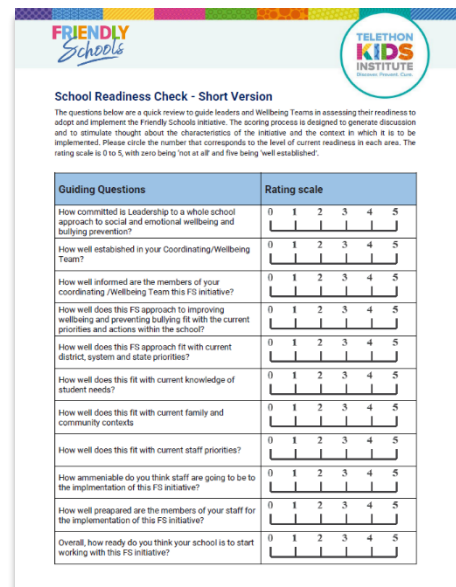
Assessment Tools

There are different versions of the School Readiness Check provided to allow for the needs and capacity of your Team.

School Readiness Check - Short Version

This resource is designed as a quick screening tool to guide leaders and Wellbeing Teams in assessing their readiness to being implemented. The scoring process is designed to generate discussion and to stimulate thought about the characteristics of the initiative and the context in which it is to be implemented. Scoring is done by circle the number that corresponds to the level of current readiness in each area. The rating scale is 0 to 5, with zero being 'not at all' and five being 'well established'.

This short version is a quick check for the beginning of your actions to define any pressure points that may exist that may prove to be a barrier to your progress. However, further into your planning, it is recommended you engage in more detailed review of the key areas for readiness to ensure you have maximised your capacity to implement the improvement approach.



School Readiness Check Items – long version - manual

This resource is designed as a more detailed manual review of key areas of readiness to implement. Scoring is done by circle the number that corresponds to the level of current readiness in each area. This tool provides lists of statements relating to each of the areas:

- Leadership.
- Staff knowledge and skills.
- School climate.
- Staff and resource support.
- School's organisational support.
- Compatibility, fit and feasibility.
- School's Priority and motivation

School Readiness Check Items – long version - manual							
Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement by circling one response only		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither Agree nor disagree	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree
1.0 These questions relate to leadership in your school							
1.	Our school leadership team has a clear plan to improve student wellbeing and bullying prevention	1	2	3	4	5	6
2.	Our principal is actively engaged in strategies to improve wellbeing and bullying prevention	1	2	3	4	5	6
3.	A staff champion strongly communicates the benefits of using a whole-school approach to wellbeing and bullying prevention	1	2	3	4	5	6
4.	A school team is responsible for implementing a whole-school approach to wellbeing and bullying prevention	1	2	3	4	5	6
5.	Our school leadership team is supportive of staff efforts to implement a whole-school approach to wellbeing and bullying prevention	1	2	3	4	5	6
6.	Our school leadership team will maintain their commitment to implementing a whole-school approach to wellbeing and bullying prevention over the longer term	1	2	3	4	5	6
2.0 These questions relate to your school's staff knowledge and skills							
7.	Members of school team have the knowledge and skills necessary to implement a whole-school approach to wellbeing and bullying prevention	1	2	3	4	5	6
8.	Staff have a clear understanding of what is required to implement a whole-school approach to wellbeing and bullying prevention	1	2	3	4	5	6
9.	Staff feel prepared to implement a whole-school approach to wellbeing and bullying prevention	1	2	3	4	5	6
10.	Teachers have the knowledge and skills to teach social and emotional learning activities to students	1	2	3	4	5	6
11.	Staff have the knowledge and skills to effectively implement whole-school bullying prevention and response strategies	1	2	3	4	5	6
12.	Staff have the knowledge and skills to effectively implement whole-school wellbeing promotion	1	2	3	4	5	6
3.0 These questions relate to your school's climate							
13.	Our school recognises student mental health and social and emotional wellbeing is important to student learning	1	2	3	4	5	6
14.	General staff attitude towards new approaches is positive	1	2	3	4	5	6
15.	Staff are supportive of one another's efforts to try new practices to help students	1	2	3	4	5	6
16.	Staff regularly share information and ideas with one another	1	2	3	4	5	6

How to conduct the School Readiness Check

- The activity should be conducted together as a group, with all committee members present, if possible, particularly school administration members such as the Principal or Deputy Principal.
- It is important that this activity be conducted at the beginning of each year, particularly if committee members have changed, so that capacity can be monitored and built gradually. Some strategies may take some time (maybe two to three years) to put into place and influence program success.
- One member should act as a facilitator to guide the group through the questions and another member as a scribe to record the group's key comments using the master report provided.
- It is acceptable to answer many of these activity questions as 'don't know', 'haven't thought about this yet' or 'not skilled and experienced' as this activity will help to identify those areas where help and support is needed to build your school's capacity.
- Each school will have their unique priorities, resources and skills and knowledge of staff members so each question will be answered differently by each school. There are no right or wrong answers, but the questions are designed to initiate discussion and get the committee thinking about important issues within the school.
- It is an opportunity to reflect upon the planning you may have already done and to think about the reality of implementing the program within your school.

How your school can use the readiness information.

Once the activity is completed and a list of actions identified, it becomes very clear what the areas of opportunity are to work on to increase school capacity. It may be to provide more whole school staff training or increase staff morale, increase communication channels between committee members and the whole school staff, re-allocate resources or increase leadership and support within the school.

Some questions may not require actions to be devised such as the amount of disruption occurring inside and outside the school. It is simply an opportunity to acknowledge that there may have been a lot going on that influenced the implementation of the project that year. If these actions are incorporated into the overall program strategies, the capacity for the school to successfully implement this program and others will increase. Each school's context and capacity is unique. Your team may wish to workshop these findings with staff to determine priorities of strategies to build school and staff capacity. The 'Check' is intended to facilitate discussion with staff about what they want to achieve and how ready they are to undertake a whole-school approach.

The following questions may be useful to prompt discussion:

- What factors are a strength for our school? e.g. Is a whole-school approach to wellbeing and mental health currently perceived:
 - As a priority for our school?
 - A positive fit for our school's culture and values?
 - Compatible with our school's current student wellbeing needs?
- Is our school perceived to have:
 - A supportive leadership team?
 - Staff who are prepared and have the necessary knowledge and skills?
 - Adequate staff time to plan and review a whole-school approach?
- What areas do our school need to prioritise and build capacity?
 - What overall factor had the lowest mean score for our school?
 - What statements scored the lowest means and are these related?
 - How will this approach and actions fit with what is already in place?

If the findings show too many barriers or competing initiatives at this time, it may be preferable to delay the implementation process until the following term or year until conditions are more favourable for success. Identified priority actions should be placed in your school's implementation plan with allocated staff responsibilities, any resources required and timelines for completion.

Building Capacity for Implementation

Advice from schools involved in the Friendly Schools research studies are presented throughout this resource. The Friendly Schools research projects has involved over 40,000 Australian students, their teachers, parents and school leaders and provides key learnings of ways to strengthen the capacity of schools and educators to improve students' social and emotional wellbeing and reduce bullying.

Key success factors from schools

- A champion who was experienced and passionate about student wellbeing to facilitate action.
- A leader/coordinator who had dedicated time to allocate for planning and supporting other staff.
- Dedicated regular meeting times.
- Time release from teaching duties for Team to support staff and attend regular meetings.
- Greater flexibility to select appropriate staff and allocate roles and time to various responsibilities.
- An embedded school culture that states 'staff and students care about each other'.
- Clear link between school vision and supportive culture and positive climate.
- Preventive approach rather than a reactive approach to student support.
- Regular information drip feeding to staff and professional learning to foster a common understanding and feelings of responsibility for student support.
- Use a systematic implementation process of assessing, planning and implementing and reviewing their actions based on local school data.
- Clear mechanisms for data collection that inform planning.
- Showed data to all staff as evidence of their school community to create staff buy-in - what is important and why changes were being proposed.
- Case study schools' student and staff outcomes indicate significant reductions in bullying behaviours and changes in school and staff capacity.
- A change process that embeds and sustains the intervention in a real-world setting (stage matched activities and drivers to build infrastructure and capacity)
- Improvement processes and flexibility has enabled the schools to change their way of doing things - context to support the effective intervention.
- Implementation teams make it happen!

Four key drivers to build school readiness

More actions to address the factors in the readiness check and build your team, staff and school capacity are described in the follow sections. These focus on the initial phase of deciding to adopt a whole-school approach and the preparation to implement actions across the school to improve wellbeing and prevent bullying. Four key drivers have been found to needed to build the readiness of the school and capacity of the team and staff before your school starts.

1. **Engage leadership and staff support.**
2. **Planning for organisational support and resources**
3. **Staff knowledge and skills and motivation**
4. **Compatibility with school community needs.**

1. Committed and engaged leadership.

The principal's involvement is pivotal to the success of the policies development and implementation, particularly the whole-school activities.

The principal's and the leadership team's involvement are pivotal to the success of the policy development and implementation process and in particular, implementation of whole-school activities. A principal who is actively engaged and places a high priority on wellbeing and reducing bullying is more likely to increase the commitment of the staff to the new initiative²³ and increase the quality of implementation and intervention adherence.²⁴

Principles for Success

Success is more likely when:

- The school leadership team has a clear plan to improve student wellbeing and bullying prevention.
- The principal is actively engaged in strategies to improve wellbeing and bullying prevention.
- A staff champion strongly communicates the benefits of using a whole-school approach to wellbeing and bullying prevention.
- A school team is supported by leadership in implementing a whole-school approach to wellbeing and bullying prevention.
- The school leadership team is supportive of staff efforts to implement a whole-school approach to wellbeing and bullying prevention.
- Our school leadership team will maintain their commitment to implementing a whole-school approach to wellbeing and bullying prevention over the longer term.

Leadership Reflection Pointers

- How do you collaborate with staff and stakeholders to identify and promote a shared vision of increased social and emotional wellbeing and a supportive school environment?
- How do you embrace the principles of equal opportunity and natural decision making and take account of the different views and interests of stakeholders?
- How do you encourage innovation and improvement while maintaining school connectedness for students, staff and families?
- What processes do you use to support staff in the face of change?
- What processes do you have in place to demonstrate your support from the Wellbeing Team to implement this approach?
- What processes do you use to maintain momentum and direction while guiding long term program intervention and review?

Advice from schools

- Seeing leaders in the school “walk-the-talk” demonstrates to the school community that the principal and the leadership team are highly committed to making the school a safer and more supportive environment for students.
- The principal and the leadership team enable and encourage all members of the whole-school community (staff, students, families) to actively participate in planning and decision-making about school action to reduce bullying through regular, planned monitoring and feedback.
- Our principal made the commitment to attend the first meetings of the Team to make sure we knew from the outset we had the support of leadership and could make the decisions necessary to move ahead with our plans. Without the principal's attendance it would have been difficult to make the decisions about funding, timelines, priorities and other elements of organisation and resourcing. We were able to fast track our planning due to having the principal being fully present and engaged in the process.

2. Planning for organisational support and resources

Integrate social and emotional wellbeing and bullying prevention objectives and actions into school strategic planning and monitoring.

School organisational processes are important in facilitating successful program implementation²⁵ including:

- Adequate time for the team coordinator to plan and provide leadership
- Adequate planning time for team staff
- Accessible intervention materials to all staff
- Intervention plans that are incorporated into school planning processes
- Adequate training, technical assistance and coaching
- Quality monitoring, feedback and communication channels between team members

Facilitation processes within schools such as these have shown to predict the quantity of school implementation activity.²⁷

Principles for Success

Success is more likely when:

- The social and emotional learning program is integrated into the current school planning processes.
- Strategies to reduce and manage bullying are included in school behaviour management planning and priority processes.
- Well planned and integrated strategies are developed that work at several different levels and use a combination of strategies.

Success is more likely when the school Wellbeing Team:

- Reviews and reflects upon current actions, strengths and needs across the whole school to increase social and emotional learning and prevent bullying.
- Make recommendations, based on their school's current strengths and needs.
- Work with the school community to establish common understandings and consistent school responses.
- Facilitate the development of a whole school improvement plan to increase social and emotional learning and the promotion of safe and supportive learning environments for all members of the school community.

Reflection Pointers

- To what extent will this program be integrated into the current school planning process?
- How do you plan to collaborate with members of the whole school community to identify and promote a shared vision for what you want from this process of improvement?
- To what extent do you plan to encourage staff, students, and parents to participate in school planning and decision making?
- How do you plan to collaborate with members of the whole school community to promote common understanding and promote a shared vision for this approach?
- What opportunities are currently provided for the open discussion of ideas?
- How do you plan to take account of the different views and interests of stakeholders?

Integration into strategic planning

Integrate social and emotional wellbeing and bullying prevention objectives and actions into school strategic planning and monitoring.

When a new approach or practice is proposed in a school, the benefit of integrating its activities within existing school development plans and processes is clear.²⁶ Strategies to improve wellbeing and prevent bullying must be included across relevant school strategic plans and policies such as student engagement, health, behaviour management and social justice and equity policies to provide accountability and resourcing. Pooling of resources and staff time to achieve similar objectives can mean less time and energy by staff is needed and the likelihood of sustainability increased.

Advice from schools

- Integrate wellbeing and mental health objectives and actions into school strategic planning and monitoring.
- Reallocate appropriate resources identified in collaboration with staff needs.
- Share the workload and minimise staff turnover with adequate number of wellbeing team staff.
- The team and the coordinator have adequate time to meet regularly, plan and facilitate school action.
- Teaching staff have allocated time in the curriculum to develop students' key understandings and competencies to encourage positive wellbeing and mental health.
- Allow adequate time to plan, implement and sustain whole-school actions to improve wellbeing and mental health (three to five years to initiate, five to seven years to sustain).

Disruptions to implementation

Any "disruptions" occurring inside and outside the school environment that will influence the success of school actions to improve wellbeing and mental health are acknowledged.

As schools are busy places, there will always be disruptions occurring in the school environment that will affect how well a new initiative is implemented. Schools involved in past research conducted within our team at Telethon Kids Institute found the process of identifying those disruptions occurring inside and outside the school was useful to help explain why some strategies may have not worked as well as expected. It is important to acknowledge that the strategy itself may be effective when implemented at another time or in different circumstances and can assist with future planning. These same schools noted that in identifying these potential disruptions, solutions were often found to overcome these obstacles which reduced their impact on school operations.

Resource support

The provision of adequate resources, including materials, staffing, facilities, funding, daily planning time, training and longer time frames to trial the strategies in the school, have also been linked to successful program outcomes.^{27,28} A study conducted with school principals identified that having adequate resources was directly linked to successful program outcomes where the program "dose" was completely determined by sufficiency of resources.²⁹ One of the key resource barriers identified by staff in a past research studies conducted by the Telethon Kids Institute was the competing demands on teacher time. Insufficient time for the school team to plan, teaching staff to teach and school leaders to facilitate a whole-school approach. When actions were implemented strategically but slowly, in small doses, time restraints were managed and overcome.

Team Time

A key part of successful implementation is having a team that functions effectively and is adequately resourced. The team have adequate time to meet regularly, plan and facilitate school action.

Insufficient planning time allocated to the coordinator and team members to meet and facilitate the school action plan is often a key barrier to implementation success. Planning time is particularly necessary at the initial development stages of the implementation process. The coordinator requires additional time to provide leadership and support to other team members with a half day per week (0.1 FTE) recommended. First tasks for the team would be to prepare a timeline of action for the policy development and its implementation so it is clear what invested time is required, and when tasks would need to be completed.

Advice from schools

- While set times for the team to meet regularly are essential, identifying numerous channels of communication between team members means that actions can move along without meeting face-to-face as often.
- For example, school IT communications such as emails are an obvious way to facilitate discussions allowing face-to-face meetings to be reserved for decision-making.
- In addition to team meetings, mechanisms for regular monitoring and feedback from all staff to the team are important. E.g. staff room notice boards to post updates and keep other staff informed or a feedback box for staff to add suggestions.
- Allocating a brief but regular time slot in staff meetings for staff to provide feedback.

4. Staff knowledge, and skills and motivation

Gaining staff buy-in and motivation (particularly busy teachers) to support and implement practice change is the most important but challenging barrier for school teams. Staff must feel a 'relative advantage' that the new ideas proposed are better than what they are already doing and there is a need to change.^{30,31.}

Training is one of the most common activities designed to improve a number of readiness factors including staff buy-in and knowledge and has been shown to improve implementation fidelity.³² Coaching that provides feedback, demonstrate and actively engage staff by providing them with opportunities to practice new skills are also instrumental in improving staff implementation capacity.³³ Peer learning between staff and a learning approach to trying new thing and improve over time though community of practice principles can also allow staff to contribute in small steps that is not overwhelming and a sense of they are part of a bigger initiative.

**For more information about Building staff readiness, motivation and capacity:
See Step 1.3 Task 1 for [Toolkit: Building staff readiness and capacity](#).**

Principles for Success

Success is more likely when:

- Members of school team have the knowledge and skills necessary to implement a whole-school approach to wellbeing and bullying prevention.
- Staff have a clear understanding of what is required to implement a whole-school approach to wellbeing and bullying prevention.
- Staff feel prepared to implement a whole-school approach to wellbeing and bullying prevention.
- Teachers have the knowledge and skills to teach social and emotional learning activities to students.
- Staff have the knowledge and skills to effectively implement whole-school bullying prevention and response strategies.
- Staff have the knowledge and skills to effectively implement whole-school wellbeing promotion.

Reflection Pointers

- How do you support staff and promote and reward their achievements?
- What processes do you use to support staff in the face of change?
- How do you ensure that staff undertake professional development that supports their needs and the needs of the school?
- To what extent do you delegate tasks and responsibility?
- What strategies do you use to encourage staff to achieve program goals?

"I think there is probably greater self-confidence in our capacity to make change ... "I think there is an increased perception that we can actually challenge behaviours and stereotypes."

- School Principal

5. Compatibility with the school needs

The implementation of the program will be far successful if it is compatible with school priorities, student needs, school ethos and school structure.

Aligning your whole-school vision with the evidence

A school that promotes good social-emotional wellbeing provides a safe and supportive environment that encourages positive relationships and a sense of belonging. To achieve this outcome, the school vision needs to be developed collaboratively with students, staff and families in a way that provides a common understanding of what wellbeing means for the school community. In order to have staff commitment to a whole-school approach to wellbeing and mental health, it is crucial that staff feel it aligns with their own needs, the needs of their school community and with the whole-school vision.

Friendly Schools study schools engaged staff in a process of alignment of the school vision with the evidence to challenge their thinking around the specific needs of their school. The first step in this process was to present the staff with current evidence and common understandings around wellbeing, mental health, and social and emotional learning. They were then asked to use this knowledge as the basis for them to identify the needs of the members of their school community and then identify desired outcomes for each group. This can be run as a brief whole-school staff activity in a staff meeting.

For more information about Building staff readiness, motivation and capacity:

See **Step 1.3 Task 1** for [Toolkit: Building staff readiness and capacity](#).

Principles for Success

Success is more likely when:

- National, state and district frameworks, policies and mandates strongly support the program.
- The program implementation process respect and value your pre-existing capacities and effective practices.
- The programs approach be responsive to your school context, which is ever changing.
- Strategies are integrated into existing structures, partnerships and accountability processes.
- Staff believe that there is potential for improvement on what the school has been doing before.
- The policy and program are relatively easy to implement.
- The program is compatible with school priorities, student needs, school ethos and school structure.

Reflection Pointers

- To what extent are you aware of current education national state and system level frameworks, policies and guidelines?
- How compatible will this program be with current school priorities, student needs and school ethos?
- Does the program take into account your pre-existing good practice, effective strategies and practices?
- Is the proposed program well designed to consider your current strengths and needs in order to develop an effective plan for improvement.
- Does the program allow for integration with current structures, process and programs?
- Does the program planning take into account your individual school context and the needs of your staff, students and community?
- How much disruption is there currently inside the school?

Capacity building outcomes

- ✓ Whole-school approaches to improve wellbeing and mental health are integrated into our school's strategic planning and accountability processes.
- ✓ Whole-school wellbeing and mental health implementation is regularly monitored and evaluated.
- ✓ Our student wellbeing team communicates well with other staff teams in our school.
- ✓ Our student wellbeing team coordinates well with each other when working to implement a whole-school approach to improve wellbeing and mental health.
- ✓ Adequate time is allocated to implement and sustain whole-school wellbeing and mental health approaches to achieve outcomes (e.g. three years to establish, five years to sustain).
- ✓ Adequate numbers of staff are part of the wellbeing team to ensure the workload is shared and the impact on staff is minimised.
- ✓ The team and the coordinator have adequate time to meet regularly, plan and facilitate school action.
- ✓ Resources necessary to implement a whole-school approach to wellbeing and mental health are available to all staff.
- ✓ Our staff have adequate training and support to implement a whole-school approach to improve student wellbeing and mental health.
- ✓ Teachers have the knowledge and skills and adequate time to plan and teach social and emotional learning activities to students.
- ✓ Members of school team have the knowledge and skills necessary to implement a whole-school approach to wellbeing and mental health.
- ✓ Staff have a clear understanding of what is required to implement a whole-school approach to wellbeing and mental health and feel prepared.
- ✓ Staff have the knowledge and skills to effectively implement whole-school bullying prevention and response strategies.
- ✓ Staff have the knowledge and skills to effectively implement whole-school mental health promotion.



References

1. Fullan, Michael. The New Meaning of Educational Change. Library Journals, LLC; 2007. p. S83.
2. Cunningham CE, Vaillancourt T, Rimas H, Deal K, Cunningham L, Short K, et al. Modeling the Bullying Prevention Program Preferences of Educators: A Discrete Choice Conjoint Experiment. *Journal of abnormal child psychology*. 2009;37(7):929-43.
3. Cunningham PB, Henggeler SW. Implementation of an Empirically Based Drug and Violence Prevention and Intervention Program in Public School Settings. *Journal of clinical child and adolescent psychology*. 2001;30(2):221-32.
4. Salmivalli C, Kaukiainen A, Voeten M. Anti-bullying intervention: Implementation and outcome. *British journal of educational psychology*. 2005;75(3):465-87.
5. Stevens V, De Bourdeaudhuij I, Van Oost P. Anti-bullying interventions at school: aspects of programme adaptation and critical issues for further programme development. *Health promotion international*. 2001;16(2):155-67.
6. Kallestad JH, Olweus D. Predicting Teachers' and Schools' Implementation of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program: A Multilevel Study. *Prevention & treatment*. 2003;6(1):No Pagination Specified-No Pagination Specified.
7. Durlak JA, DuPre EP. Implementation matters: A review of research on the influence of implementation on program outcomes and the factors affecting implementation. *American journal of community psychology*. 2008;41(3):327-50.
8. Ferguson CJ, Miguel CS, Kilburn JC, Sanchez P. The effectiveness of school-based anti-bullying programs: A meta-analytic review. *Criminal justice review (Atlanta, Ga)*. 2007;32(4):401-14.
9. Fixsen DL, Blase KA, Naoom SF, Wallace F. Core Implementation Components. *Research on social work practice*. 2009;19(5):531-40.
10. Bertram RM, Blase KA, Fixsen DL. Improving Programs and Outcomes: Implementation Frameworks and Organization Change. *Res Soc Work Pract*. 2015;25(4):477-487. doi:10.1177/1049731514537687
11. Scaccia JP, Cook BS, Lamont A, et al. A practical implementation science heuristic for organizational readiness: R = MC2. *J Community Psychol*. 2015;43(4):484-501. doi:10.1002/jcop.21698
12. Durlak JA, Dupre AEP. Implementation Matters : A Review of Research on the Influence of Implementation on Program Outcomes and the Factors Affecting Implementation. Published online 2008:327-350. doi:10.1007/s10464-008-9165-0
13. Damschroder L. The Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research (CFIR). *Implement Sci*. Published online 2022:38-41. doi:10.4324/9781003109945-11
14. Shoesmith A, Hall A, Wolfenden L, et al. Barriers and facilitators influencing the sustainment of health behaviour interventions in schools and childcare services : a systematic review. Published online 2021:1-20.
15. Locke J, Lawson GM, Beidas RS, et al. Individual and organizational factors that affect implementation of evidence-based practices for children with autism in public schools: A cross-sectional observational study. *Implement Sci*. 2019;14(1):1-9. doi:10.1186/s13012-019-0877-3
16. Domitrovich CE, Li Y, Mathis ET, Greenberg MT. Individual and organizational factors associated with teacher self-reported implementation of the PATHS curriculum. *J Sch Psychol*. 2019;76(August 2018):168-185. doi:10.1016/j.jsp.2019.07.015
17. Cunningham CE, Barwick M, Short K, et al. Modeling the Mental Health Practice Change Preferences of Educators: A Discrete-Choice Conjoint Experiment. *School Ment Health*. 2014;6(1):1-14. doi:10.1007/s12310-013-9110-8
18. Forman SG, Olin SS, Hoagwood KE, Crowe M, Saka N. Evidence-Based Interventions in Schools: Developers' Views of Implementation Barriers and Facilitators. *School Ment Health*. 2008;1(1):26-36. doi:10.1007/s12310-008-9002-5
19. Cross D, Barnes A. One size doesn't fit all: Rethinking implementation research for bullying prevention. . In: In Schott R.M. and Søndergaard DM (Eds), ed. *School*
20. Flaspohler PD, Meehan C, Maras MA, Keller KE. Ready, Willing, and Able: Developing a Support System to

Promote Implementation of School-Based Prevention Programs. *Am J Community Psychol*. 2012;50(3-4):428-444. doi:10.1007/s10464-012-9520-z

21. Kingston B, Mattson SA, Dymnicki A, et al. Building Schools' Readiness to Implement a Comprehensive Approach to School Safety. *Clin Child Fam Psychol Rev*. 2018;21(4):433-449. doi:10.1007/s10567-018-0264-7
22. Pearce N, Monks H, Alderman N, et al. 'It ' s All About Context ' : Building School Capacity to Implement a Whole - School Approach to Bullying. *Int J Bullying Prev*. 2022;(0123456789). doi:10.1007/s42380-022-00138-6
23. Gottfredson, D. and G. Gottfredson, 'Quality of school-based prevention programs: results from a national survey'. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 2002. 39: p. 3035.
24. Roberts-Gray, et al., loc. cit. Pearce N, Monks H, Alderman N, et al. ' It ' s All About Context ' : Building School Capacity to Implement a Whole - School Approach to Bullying. *Int J Bullying Prev*. 2022;(0123456789). doi:10.1007/s42380-022-00138-6
25. Gingiss P, Roberts-Gray C, Boerm M. Bridge-It: A system for predicting implementation fidelity for school-based tobacco prevention programs. *Prev Sci*. 2006;7(2):197-207.
26. Pearce N, Monks H, Alderman N, et al. ' It ' s All About Context ' : Building School Capacity to Implement a Whole - School Approach to Bullying. *Int J Bullying Prev*. 2022;(0123456789). doi:10.1007/s42380-022-00138-6
27. Thaker S, Steckler A, Sanchez V, Khatapoush S, Rose J, Hallfors DD. Program characteristics and organizational factors affecting the implementation of a school-based indicated prevention program. *Health Educ Res*. 2008;23(2):238-248. doi:10.1093/her/cym025
28. Roberts-Gray C, Gingiss PM, Boerm M. Evaluating school capacity to implement new programs. *Eval Program Plann*. 2007;30(3):247-257. doi:10.1016/j.evalproplan.2007.04.002
29. Smith D, Cousins B, Stewart R. Antibullying interventions in schools: ingredients of effective programs . *Can J Educ*. 2005;28(4):739-762.
30. Domitrovich CE, Bradshaw CP, Poduska JM, et al. Maximizing the implementation quality of evidence-based preventive interventions in schools: A conceptual framework. *Adv Sch Ment Health Promot*. 2008;1(3):6-28.
31. Bosworth K, Gingiss PM, Potthoff S, Roberts-Gray C. A Bayesian model to predict the success of the implementation of health and education innovations in school-centred programs. *Eval Program Plann*. 1999;22:1-11.
32. Wanless SB, Rimm-Kaufman SE, Abry T, Larsen RA, Patton CL. Engagement in Training as a Mechanism to Understanding Fidelity of Implementation of the Responsive Classroom Approach. *Prev Sci*. 2015;16(8):1107-1116. doi:10.1007/s11121-014-0519-6
33. Wanless SB, Patton CL, Rimm-Kaufman SE, Deutsch NL. Setting-Level Influences on Implementation of the Responsive Classroom Approach. *Prev Sci*. 2013;14(1):40-51. doi:10.1007/s11121-012-0294-1