



UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA  
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH



# The Idea Readiness Tool

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# Idea Readiness Tool

- An evidence-based tool to help get new ideas off the ground in a school community (e.g., individual school, school board, school district, etc.)
  - Examples of new ideas:
    - Practice,
    - Initiative,
    - Policy,
    - Product,
    - Etc.

\*As long as the new idea in question is considered new by the school community considering its adoption.

# How Was the Tool Developed?

- Modified the evidence-based Policy Readiness Tool
- Uses Rogers' "diffusion of innovations theory" to make participating in the idea change process more accessible



**Diffusion:**  
the spread of  
something across  
time and place

**Innovation:**  
something new to  
solve a problem or  
improve a situation

## **Diffusion of Innovations**

= a theory that is used to examine how something new spreads from place to place over time

# What is Level of Innovation?

The degree to which an adopter is relatively *earlier* or *later* in taking up new ideas than other members of a system.

# Idea Readiness Tool

- Includes three key parts:
  - (1) Checklist: Identify a school community's readiness for a new idea
  - (2) Strategies: Specifically tailored for working with school communities at different stages of readiness
  - (3) Resources: Information to support the strategies

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## Checklist for Assessing School Community Readiness for a New Idea

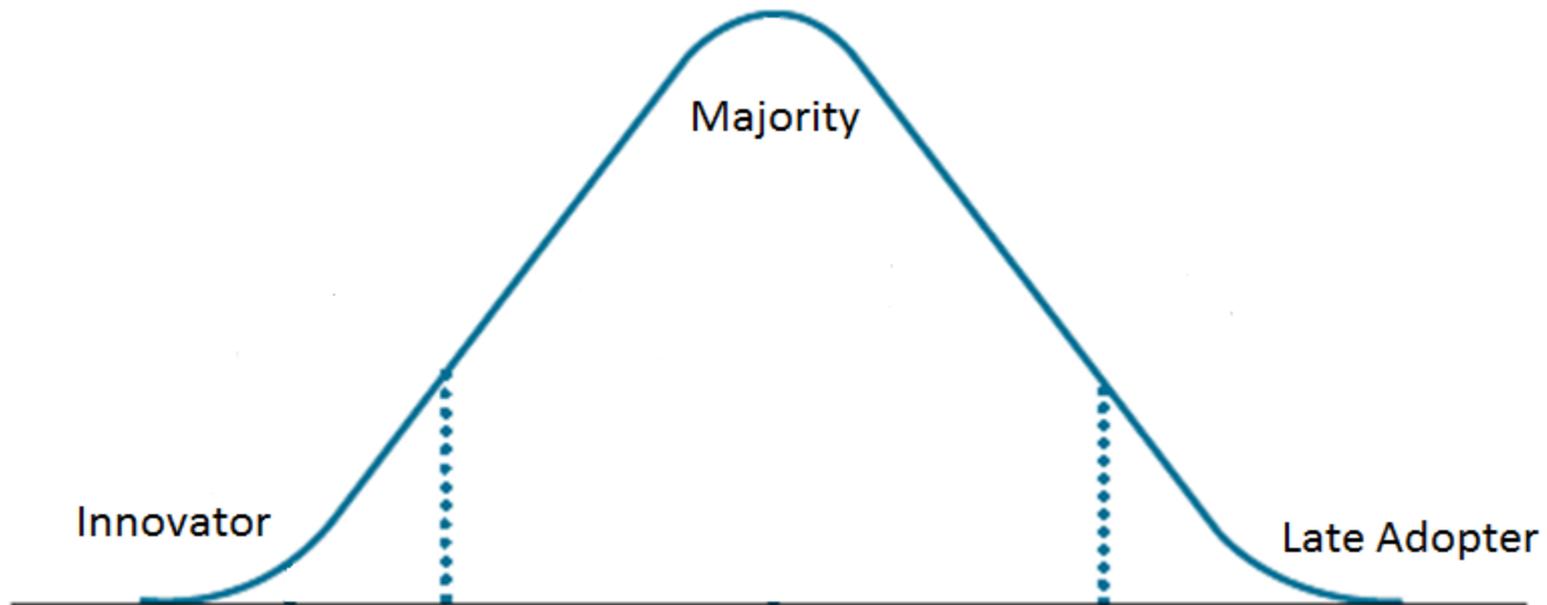
A	B	C	Response (A, B or C?)
The school community is comfortable being among the first to try new ideas and initiatives	The school community usually goes along with other school communities' recommendations about trying new ideas and initiatives	The school community is uncomfortable trying new ideas and initiatives	
The school community enjoys being the first to try something new	The school community prefers to try new things after seeing other school communities successfully use them	The school community prefers to use things it is currently using	
The school community likes to try things that are seen on TV or read about	The school community prefers to try things that are seen on TV or read about, only after seeing other school communities successfully use them	The school community prefers not to try things that are seen on TV or read about until they have been thoroughly tested	
The school community is always looking for something new to benefit its employees and students	The school community sometimes looks for new things to try to benefit its employees and students	The school community likes using more traditional things to benefit its school communities	
If the school community doesn't know what to do, it asks other schools for advice	If the school community doesn't know what to do, it sometimes asks other school communities for advice	If the school community doesn't know what to do, it tries to figure it out itself	
Incentives would motivate the school community to consider trying something new	Incentives might motivate the school community to consider trying something new	Incentives would not motivate the school community to consider trying something new	
It is very important to the school community's professional reputation to be the first to try something new	It is somewhat important to the school community's professional reputation to be the first to try something new	It is not important to the school community's professional reputation to be the first to try something new	

# “Readiness” Categories

- Use of 3 categories eases applicability:
  - Innovators
  - Majority
  - Late Adopters

**Readiness = relative tolerance for risk for a new idea  
It is NOT static & can be different from issue to issue**

# Using the Idea Readiness Tool: “Adopter Categories”



# Innovators

- Are described as “**adventurous**” and often serve as initiators or role models within their social networks
  - Attracted by high-reward initiatives and are “risk-takers”
  - Can cope with elevated levels of uncertainty associated with the new idea
  - Typically willing to cope with initial problems & able to identify solutions to these problems

# The Majority

- Are described as “**deliberate**” because they require time to consider the evidence and determine whether to adopt a new idea
  - Seldom lead the pack
  - Is often of the philosophy that it is better to change as a group than to be one of the first to change
  - Tend to adopt new ideas at about the same time as the average adopter

# Late Adopters

- Are described as “**traditional**” and may be skeptical of new ideas (without substantial evidence) or eager to maintain the status quo
  - Usually wait until the majority of others have adopted a new idea
  - May need to be pressured into the adoption of a new idea
  - May never adopt the idea unless required to

# “Readiness” Categories - Caveats

- Not a value judgment about a school community

**There is no good or bad adopter category!**

- Instead, the Tool offers an efficient way to select appropriate strategies to support the development of a new idea

**Not a one-size-fits-all solution, but a place to start!**

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## Key Strategies to Gain Support for a New Idea

This section provides details about strategies that can be used with school communities at different levels of readiness (i.e., Innovators, Majority and Late Adopters) for moving forward with a new idea. These strategies, along with the supplementary resources provided, are meant to support you throughout the process of building, continuing, improving, and sustaining a new idea in your school community.

Use the sections outlined below to kick-start your plan and guide you as you go.

### Strategies to Use with an 'Innovator' School Community

#### Who is an Innovator School Community?

An Innovator school community tends to be passionate and forward thinking. When working with Innovators, remember that they take pride in being viewed as leaders. Be mindful of the vision that they have for their school community and their desire to leave a legacy for the future. Strategies should appeal to their adventurous side and generate excitement about the actions ahead.

#### Summary of Strategies to Use with an Innovator School Community

- Provide Supportive Evidence
- Frame the Idea to Appeal to the Innovative Spirit of the School Community
- Build Relationships with Champions from the School Community
- Generate Support from the Leadership Team
- Raise Awareness about the Idea by Educating the School Community

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### ➤ Sources of Evidence

#### **Developing Healthy School Communities: Handbook**

*Alberta Healthy School Community Wellness Fund, Centre for Health Promotion Studies, University of Alberta*

This document provides an overview of the work funded by the Alberta Healthy School Community Wellness Fund (University of Alberta). Through the Wellness Fund a variety of projects are funded that support the development of healthy school communities. This is a great resource that provides background information on the important components of supporting comprehensive school health.

<http://www.achsc.org/download/2012/Handbook-Nov2011.pdf>

#### **Pan-Canadian Joint Consortium for School Health – Resources**

*Pan-Canadian Joint Consortium for School Health*

The resources found within the Pan-Canadian Joint Consortium for School Health provide supportive evidence across a range of comprehensive school health topics (e.g., mental health, physical activity, healthy eating, etc.).

<http://www.jcsh-cces.ca/index.php/resources>

#### **Teaching and Learning Toolkit**

*Education Endowment Foundation*

This online database from the UK provides information across 34 different topics (e.g., arts participation, extending school time, outdoor adventure learning, etc.) including the strength of evidence, relative to their impact and associated costs, as well as a DIY Evaluation Guide.

<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/toolkit/toolkit-a-z/about-the-toolkit/>

# Using the Idea Readiness Tool

**Let's try it together...**

- Complete the short checklist found in your package
- Choose the 'closest' description (A, B, or C) in each row
- Tally up the total number of As, Bs and Cs.

# Potential Bottlenecks

- What if I am unsure about which option to select?

**Pick the best option for right now or leave the question blank. Do the best that you can.**

- Why do some of the descriptions seem the same?

**This was done purposively to gain a comprehensive understanding of your target school community and its innovation characteristics.**

# Using the Idea Readiness Tool

Using your knowledge, expertise and experience and the strategies outlined in the Idea Readiness Tool, discuss how you would go about facilitating the uptake of your new idea in a school community.

# Applying the Tool: Strengths

## *Increasing Local Capacity for the Uptake of New Ideas*

- 1) Builds personal and school capacity
  - ✓ Increase knowledge, skills & leadership
- 2) Addresses the resource capacity issues of schools
  - ✓ Focus on effective use of limited resources via tailored strategies
- 3) Builds knowledge through collaboration
  - ✓ Encourage those from different school communities to consider new ideas

# Applying the Tool: Limitations

- Diffusion theory is uni-directional, time-specific, and linear
  - Static instrument explaining a dynamic process, which may still be ongoing at time of “readiness” assessment
- Most applicable to simple (single issue) and straightforward cases of idea change
- Caveat - users must remain flexible and leave room to act on the unexpected!

# Acknowledgements

**The team would like to thank the Alberta School Employee Benefits Plan (ASEBP) Prevention Services Team for their invaluable feedback on drafts of the Idea Readiness Tool.**

# For more information or conversation:

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