

Context Counts: How to Consider Context When Selecting an Evidence-Based Strategy

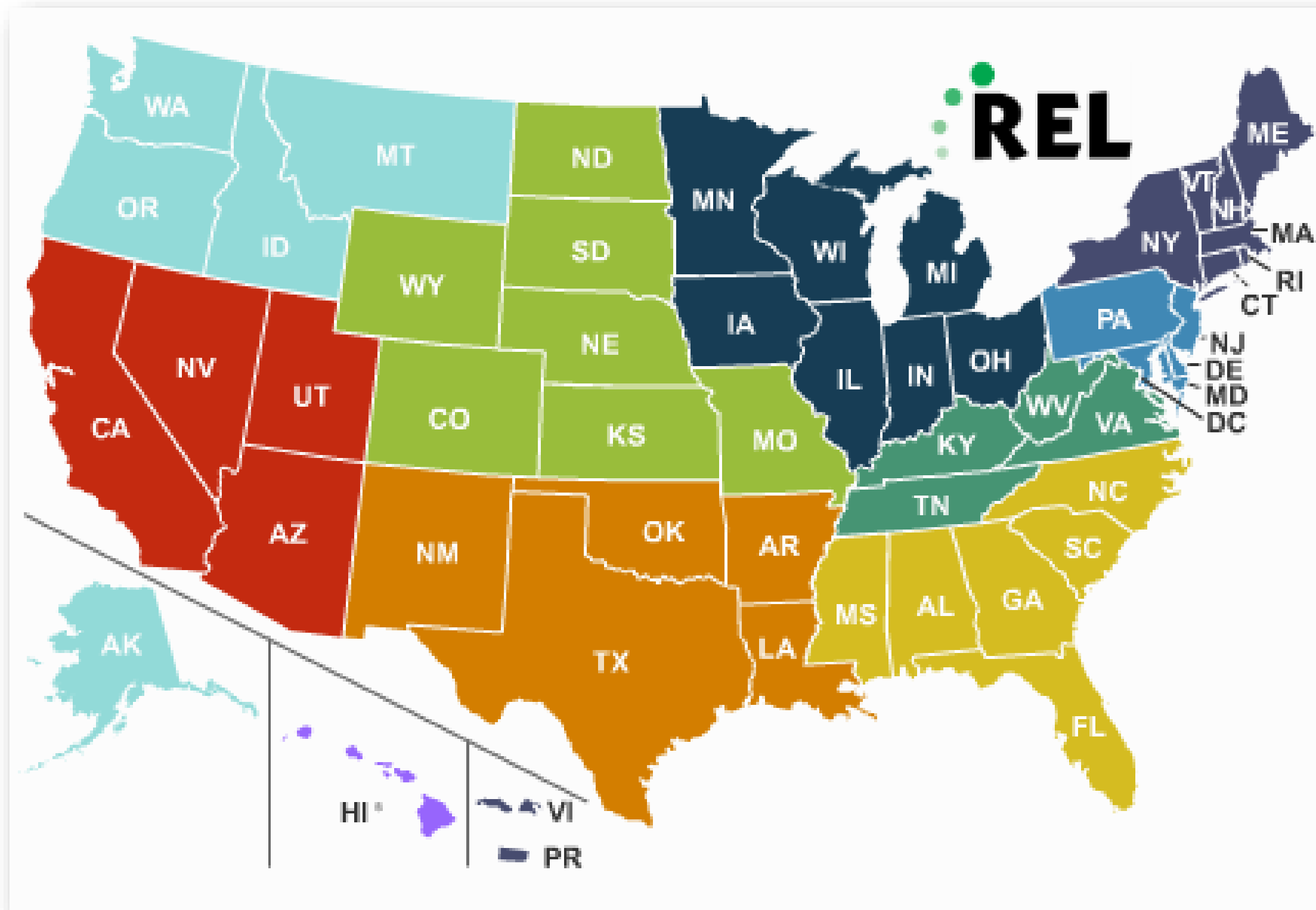
Teachers' Institute and Leading Change

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Regional Educational
Laboratory West (REL West)
WestEd

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and MOWR
Academic Standards
Arizona Department of Education

Ten RELs work in partnership with LEAs, SEAs, and others to use data and research to improve academic outcomes for students



Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs): Three Main Activities

- ✓ Conduct applied research
- ✓ Facilitate the flow of actionable, credible, up-to-date research evidence
- ✓ Provide technical support around data collection, evidence use, and research

Session Agenda

- Assessing evidence in context
- Applicability of evidence scenario and tool
- Reflection and wrap-up

Assessing Evidence in Context

Why Context Matters

- Improving outcomes is not as simple as identifying effective interventions and implementing them with fidelity; local context influences implementation and outcomes¹.
- “Understanding how to evaluate this research can empower state and local policymakers to adopt educational interventions that best address the unique context of their local education system”².
- To inform the selection of evidence-based practices, practitioners and researchers alike must consider how and why context may influence implementation and outcomes.

¹Pressman & Wildavsky, 1973; McLaughlin, 1987; McLaughlin, 2006; Honig, 2006

² Darling-Hammond, Bae, Cook-Harvey, Lam, Mercer, Podolsky, & Leisy Stosich, 2016, p. 36

Why Context Matters to You

Why does context matter to you when choosing an evidence-based practice?

How does it influence your decisions?

Applicability of Evidence-Based Interventions Tool Overview

- Contextual Factors
- Key Considerations
- Guiding Questions
- Additional Resources

APPLICABILITY OF EVIDENCE-BASED INTERVENTIONS

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.

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Contextual Factors | **Considerations and Questions**

Research alignment to outcome of interest and student population

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?

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Scenario

- Your district team is looking for a K–3 intervention for struggling readers to use alongside your core reading program.
- Your district has identified Peer-Assisted Literacy Strategies (PALS) as a possible evidence-based intervention.
- Your team has reviewed the reviews of PALS conducted by the [What Works Clearinghouse](#) and [Evidence for ESSA](#) and has established it meets one of the top three evidence tiers and would qualify under Arizona requirements.
- Using the applicability tool, assess the intervention to determine if it might be a good fit in your district.
- You will consider the intervention from three different district settings, noting what might change its applicability to the various settings.

Setting 1

District Characteristics

- 2,000 students in 10 schools in a suburban elementary district
- 15% economically disadvantaged, 3% English learners, and 10% eligible for special education services
- 25% Hispanic, 15% African American, and 60% White
- Core program: ARC Core
- Number of teachers: 110
- Excellent access to technology and professional development opportunities

Guiding Questions

Using the Evidence Applicability Tool:

- Which contextual factors might be critical to consider in choosing whether this intervention fits this context? Why?
- What other information would be important to have access to in considering this intervention for this context?

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Setting 2

District Characteristics

- 28,000 students in 21 schools in an urban elementary district
- 77% economically disadvantaged, 17% English learners, and 11% eligible for special education services
- 82% Hispanic, 10% African American, 4% Asian, and 4% White
- Core program: EL Education – Open Education Resource
- Number of teachers: 1,650
- Excellent access to technology, very limited funding for professional development

Guiding Questions

Using the Evidence Applicability Tool:

- Which contextual factors might be critical to consider in choosing whether this intervention fits this context? Why?
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Setting 3

District Characteristics

- 400 students in 3 schools in a rural elementary district
- 5% economically disadvantaged, 1% English learners, and 2% eligible for special education services
- 20% Hispanic, 5% African American, and 75% White
- Core program: Reach for Reading
- Number of teachers: 25
- Very limited access to technology and professional development opportunities

Guiding Questions

Using the Evidence Applicability Tool:

- Which contextual factors might be critical to consider in choosing whether this intervention fits this context? Why?
- What other information would be important to have access to in considering this intervention for this context?
- How did the different contexts influence your considerations about the fit of this intervention?

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Contextual Factors

Considerations and Questions

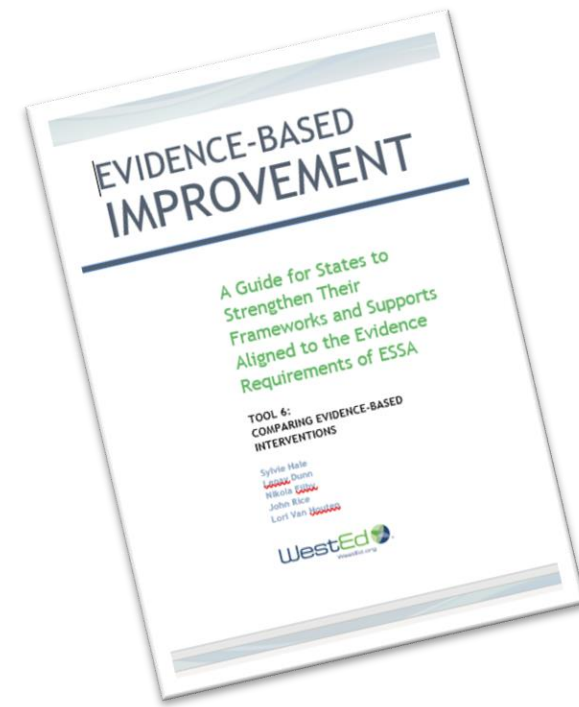
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Additional Resources

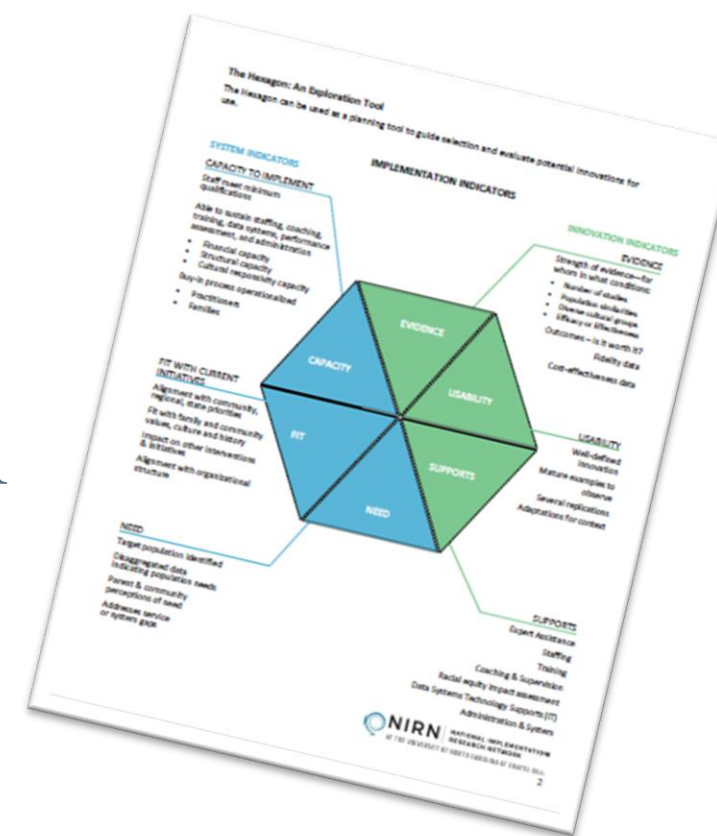


Tool 6: Comparing Evidence-Based Interventions found in Evidence-Based Improvement

Core Intervention Components: Identifying and Operationalizing What Makes Programs Work



Hexagon Tool



Reflection

Type in the chat one highlight or key takeaway for you from this session.



Feedback Survey

References

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- Honig, M. I. (2006). Complexity and policy implementation: Challenges and opportunities for the field. In M. I. Honig (Ed.), *New directions in education policy implementation: Confronting complexity* (pp. 1–23). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
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Thank you!

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