

A Guide to Support Implementation: Essential Conditions

**Policy
Implementation**

**Curriculum
Implementation**

**Priority
Implementation**

**Program
Implementation**

**Initiative
Implementation**

A Message from Alberta's Education Partners

A Guide to Support Implementation: Essential Conditions was developed by a provincial working group of education partners¹ committed to realizing positive change in Alberta's schools and classrooms. Development of this guide was founded on the shared belief that **successful implementation² requires the coordinated, collaborative, and comprehensive efforts of education partners working together towards a shared vision of learning success for all students.**

The working group reviewed current research, literature, and promising practices³ to

- identify the characteristics of successful implementation of education policies, curricula, priorities, programs and initiatives;
- describe the complexity of the work involved in successful implementation;
- identify the conditions deemed essential for successful implementation — **shared vision, leadership, research and evidence, resources, teacher professional growth, time, and community engagement**; and
- describe the environment within which these essential conditions are most effectively addressed — an environment where education stakeholders⁴ **share the responsibility** for addressing essential conditions **within a culture of learning** that fosters inquiry, risk-taking, sharing and collaboration.

This guide offers a compilation of their review in a format that is intended to **support collaborative implementation planning by educational leaders at all levels** across the Kindergarten to Grade 12 system.

Recognizing the rich diversity that exists within school communities and student populations, this guide is not intended to prescribe a specific approach to implementation planning. Instead, it offers guiding questions to support implementation planning that intentionally addresses each of the aforementioned seven essential conditions. Furthermore, it offers suggestions for what might be used as evidence that the essential conditions are being addressed. And finally, it provides space to record what specific implementation support activities might be undertaken. It is hoped that additional supports, such as illustrative examples as well as implementation planning and assessment tools, will be developed and made available via education partners' web sites.

Contributing Education Partners

The following organizations were involved in developing this guide:

- Alberta Regional Professional Development Consortia (ARPDC)
- Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA)
- Alberta School Boards Association (ASBA)
- Alberta School Councils' Association (ASCA)
- Association of School Business Officials of Alberta (ASBOA)
- College of Alberta School Superintendents (CASS)
- Faculties of Education, Alberta Universities
- Alberta Assessment Consortium (AAC)
- Alberta Education

¹ See the Contributing Education Partners above and the Acknowledgements on the back cover for more information about the working group.

² In this guide, implementation means "to put into practice an educational change that achieves its intended outcomes, the most important of which is improved student learning."

³ See the Selected Bibliography.

⁴ In this guide, education stakeholders refer to all those who contribute, either directly or indirectly, to the learning success of every student. Education stakeholders therefore include school boards, superintendents, jurisdictional and school personnel (i.e., administrators, teachers, teacher's aides, education consultants, transportation and maintenance personnel, administrative support staff), school council members, professional learning providers, faculties of education and Alberta Education personnel.

Supporting Implementation is a Shared Responsibility

Successful implementation is possible in environments where education stakeholders are committed to sharing the responsibility for supporting implementation within a culture of learning.

● Shared Responsibility

Shared responsibility is a commitment among education stakeholders — Alberta Education staff, school boards, jurisdictional and school leaders, teachers, professional learning⁵ providers, students, parents, and school councils — to develop a shared understanding of and commitment to their respective roles and responsibilities to support implementation. In some cases education stakeholders' implementation support responsibilities might be shared, in other instances they will have distinct responsibilities.

● Culture of Learning

A culture of learning is a social/emotional environment in which inquiry, risk-taking, sharing and collaboration are encouraged in order to optimize student learning.

Guiding Question:

How are education stakeholders working towards a shared understanding of and commitment to their respective roles and responsibilities to support implementation?

Guiding Question:

How are education stakeholders fostering a culture of learning to optimize learning for all students?

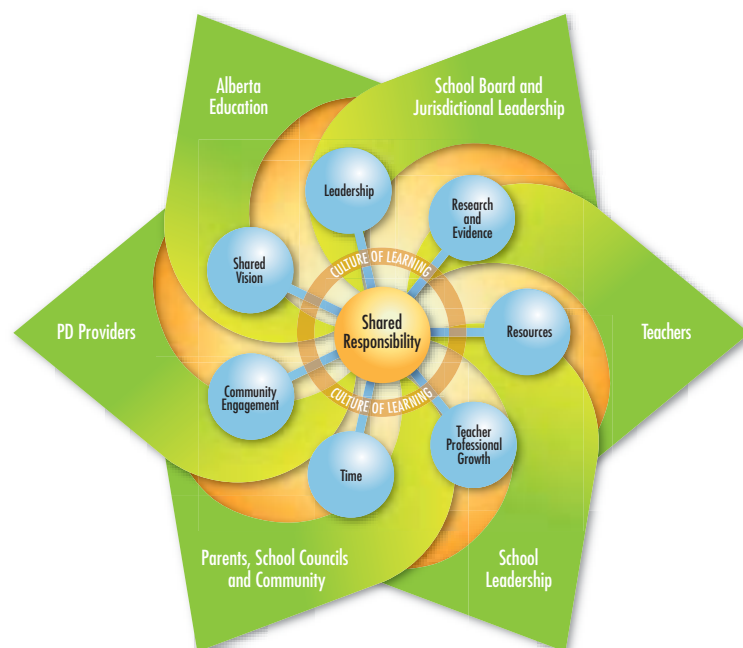


Figure 1. Essential Conditions to Support Implementation

Essential Conditions to Support Implementation

Successful implementation is possible when education stakeholders share responsibility to address the seven essential conditions — shared vision, leadership, research and evidence, resources, teacher professional growth, time, and community engagement. Figure 1 names the seven essential conditions (blue circles), identifies the education stakeholders involved in collaboratively addressing these essential conditions (green fins), and depicts the culture of learning within which educational policies, curricula, programs, initiatives, and priorities are implemented (orange circle).

⁵ Professional learning is based on a model of continuous improvement that acknowledges career-long growth and development. It involves interactions and collaborations among educators engaged in a learning community, and is best supported by comprehensive professional growth plans that consider those conditions essential to successful implementation. The terms professional learning and professional development (or PD) are used interchangeably in this guide.

Planning for Successful Implementation

Planning for successful implementation requires an understanding of the characteristics of successful implementation; coherence among plans and priorities; and the intentional efforts by education stakeholders to collaboratively address the essential conditions.

Characteristics of Successful Implementation

As education policies, curricula, priorities, programs and initiatives evolve, they need to be successfully implemented to ensure student learning success. Research shows that successful implementation

- is a shared responsibility among stakeholders;
- is developmental and contextual;
- is systematically planned, systemic, and sustained;
- is meaningful, purposeful and focused on key priorities;
- involves learning opportunities that focus on enhancing professional practice and leadership capacity among educators⁶;
- involves a variety of learning opportunities by and for all education stakeholders including support staff, students, parents, school councils and community members; and
- involves change at both organizational and individual levels.

Successful Implementation Requires System Coherence

Successful implementation is complex work requiring coherence among several plans and priorities. Provincial policy requires that all certificated teachers develop annual **professional growth plans** based on self-assessments of their learning needs relative to the *Teaching Quality Standard*. School boards and jurisdictions⁷

are required to develop annual **education plans**. Professional growth plans and annual education plans may consider evolving **provincial education goals**. Annual education plans need to specify how jurisdiction professional development plans will support implementation of school board and provincial goals. Figure 2 illustrates the need to build coherence among all of these plans to improve professional practice focused on enhanced student learning.

Figure 2:
System Coherence



Addressing the Essential Conditions

Intentionally addressing the essential conditions requires that education stakeholders collaborate to

- answer several guiding questions as they develop their implementation plans;
- use a variety of implementation strategies that identify who will be responsible for what, by when and at what cost; and
- establish what evidence will be accepted that the essential conditions have been addressed.

Implementation planning templates and tools focused on addressing each of the essential conditions are provided on the following pages.

⁶ See *A Guide to Comprehensive Professional Development Planning* (2005). This Guide is intended to support collaborative conversations and planning related to professional development. As such it serves as an important complementary resource to *A Guide to Support Implementation: Essential Conditions*.

⁷ Jurisdictions refer to Alberta school authorities, including private and charter schools. Jurisdiction staff is identified as personnel in the school or jurisdiction that support student learning (e.g., certificated teachers, administrators, non-teaching staff, and others).



SHARED VISION:

Stakeholders share an understanding of and commitment to the intended outcome(s).

Guiding Questions

How will you address this essential condition?

- How is the shared vision collaboratively developed with and endorsed by stakeholders?
- How is the shared vision articulated and communicated with stakeholders?
- How is the shared vision evident in the implementation plan?
- What evidence exists that the learning community is “living” the shared vision for all learners?
- What process is used to facilitate ongoing review of the shared vision by stakeholders?



Plans

What strategies, procedures and/or processes will you use to address this essential condition?



Evidence

What will you accept as evidence that this essential condition is being addressed? Examples of evidence may include:

- A strong, clearly articulated vision exists that reflects current research, as well as stakeholders’ priorities, needs and contexts.
- Stakeholders have a sense of ownership in the development of the vision. Stakeholders also support and can articulate the vision. All stakeholders endorse the vision statement.
- Regular stakeholder communications reference the vision and describe how it has been implemented.
- The vision informs all implementation decisions. Qualitative and quantitative evidence demonstrate how implementation decisions align with the vision.
- The vision is periodically reviewed and revised as required.



LEADERSHIP:

Leaders at all levels have the capacity to champion the shift from the current reality to the intended outcome(s).

Guiding Questions

How will you address this essential condition?

- How are current and future leaders being supported and developed?
- How are leadership roles and responsibilities articulated?
- What leadership decisions are required to support implementation of the vision?
- How are current and future leaders collaborating to build their leadership capacity?
- How are leaders working towards sustaining implementation?
- What plans are in place to support leaders' ongoing career-long/life-long professional growth?



Plans

What strategies, procedures and/or processes will you use to address this essential condition?



Evidence

What will you accept as evidence that this essential condition is being addressed? Examples of evidence may include:

- A plan exists for developing leadership capacity among all stakeholder groups. These plans
 - clearly delineate leadership roles and responsibilities;
 - identify future leadership opportunities;
 - include supports for instructional leadership as well as facilitation of continuous instructional improvement;
 - identify champions to build capacity and commitment; and
 - describe mechanisms for collaboration among current and future leaders.
- Leadership capacity is improved and distributed throughout the learning system.
- Leaders are collaborating to support and sustain implementation.
- Consultation with stakeholders, including parents, has occurred.
- Leaders are engaged in ongoing career-long/life-long professional growth.



RESEARCH AND EVIDENCE:

Current research, evidence, and lessons learned inform implementation decisions.

Guiding Questions

How will you address this essential condition?

- What data, including current research, evidence and lessons learned, is being collaboratively and systematically collected, and analyzed for the benefit of all learners?
- How is data being used to inform implementation planning and evaluation at the classroom, school, jurisdiction, school board, and provincial levels?
- How is data being shared among stakeholders?
- How is expertise being developed in terms of effective uses of data to support implementation?



Plans

What strategies, procedures and/or processes will you use to address this essential condition?



Note: Consult the Selected Bibliography in this guide for a listing of helpful literature.

Evidence

What will you accept as evidence that this essential condition is being addressed? Examples of evidence may include:

- Existing data as well as current research, evidence, and lessons learned are identified, collected, and analyzed for current trends and implications. Data sources may include, but are not limited to environmental scans, consultations, interviews, needs assessments, surveys, literature reviews, case studies, and student data.
- Student data should be comprehensive and balanced including measures that are: qualitative and quantitative, cognitive and affective, and based on both classroom and external sources.
- Personnel responsible for managing (i.e., collecting, analyzing and disseminating) data are identified.
- Data is routinely and regularly shared among stakeholders.
- Decisions about implementation are informed by current research and supported by evidence and lessons learned. Evidence, research and lessons learned are clearly referenced in implementation plans.
- Formal and informal learning communities are in evidence (e.g., professional affiliations, subscriptions to professional journals, and participation at conferences, stakeholder meetings, and other professional learning opportunities).





RESOURCES:

Human resources, materials, funding, and infrastructure are in place to realize the intended outcomes.

Guiding Questions

How will you address this essential condition?

- What is the current capacity to support this change?
- What human and material resources are required to support this change?
- What budget is required to support this change?
- What infrastructure is required to support this change?
- How might this change be phased-in to optimize current capacity and available resources?
- What strategies are being employed to authorize, acquire, and/or develop the necessary resources?



Plans

What strategies, procedures and/or processes will you use to address this essential condition?



Evidence

What will you accept as evidence that this essential condition is being addressed? Examples of evidence may include:

- The necessary personnel, materials, budget, and infrastructure are authorized, allocated and/or developed through strategic short-, mid- and long-term resource plans to ensure sustainable change.
- Resources are obtained through collaborations or partnerships with educational organizations and stakeholders where feasible.
- Resources are prioritized and optimized to support implementation.



TEACHER PROFESSIONAL GROWTH:

Teacher knowledge, skills and attributes are enhanced through ongoing professional learning.

Guiding Questions

How will you address this essential condition?

- How are the needs of the teacher, school, system and province being addressed through professional learning?
- How are current research, evidence and lessons learned informing professional growth planning and the design of professional learning opportunities?
- How are educators using self-assessment to inform their professional growth planning?
- What plans are in place to support ongoing career-long professional learning?
- How are curriculum, instruction and assessment integrated in the design of professional learning opportunities?
- How does participation in professional learning enhance professional practice?
- How are educators collaborating to support their professional growth?

Plans

What strategies, procedures and/or processes will you use to address this essential condition?



Note: Stakeholders will find *A Guide to Comprehensive Professional Development Planning* (2005) helpful as they intentionally address this essential condition.



Evidence

What will you accept as evidence that this essential condition is being addressed? Examples of evidence may include:

- Effective teacher supervision practices and policies are in place.
- Effective teacher mentorship and coaching practices are in place.
- Risk-taking and innovation are evident among educators, instructional leaders and the school board.
- Promising practices are documented and shared.
- The Teaching Quality Standard is evident in professional growth plans and informs teacher supervision practices.
- Coordinated, collaborative and comprehensive professional learning plans are in place to support implementation. The self-identified professional learning needs and preferences of participants are being met.
- Teachers have access to and are participating in a variety of learning opportunities that address their needs and preferences. Teachers are reflecting on how their professional learning experiences are influencing their professional practice.
- Teachers are collaborating to support their professional growth.
- Teachers are engaging in ongoing career-long professional growth.
- Teacher professional growth is evidenced in classrooms, schools and jurisdictions.

TIME:

Time is provided to support implementation.

Guiding Questions

How will you address this essential condition?

- How will current research about “change” be reflected in the implementation plan as it relates to the time required to affect change?
- What strategies are in place to ensure that each stakeholder group has the time they need to successfully implement and sustain the change (e.g., formal and informal learning, reflective practice)?
- What is the overall implementation timeline and how often is the timeline revisited?
- What are the time requirements and timelines for specific tasks or events within the implementation plan?



Plans

What strategies, procedures and/or processes will you use to address this essential condition?



Evidence

What will you accept as evidence that this essential condition is being addressed? Examples of evidence may include:

- Strategic short-, mid- and long-term implementation plans are in place to address the time requirements to successfully implement and sustain the change at provincial, regional and local school board levels (e.g., time required for visioning, collaboration, communication, planning, professional learning, assessment and evaluation, reporting).
- School calendars, policies, collective agreements, timetables, and budgets take into account the individual and collaborative time required to implement and sustain the change.
- Stakeholders have the time they need for formal and informal learning to support implementation.
- Stakeholders employ various strategies to make efficient use of time (e.g., job-embedded professional learning, distributed learning).



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

Parents, school councils, students, community members, businesses, industry and post-secondary institutions are partners in supporting implementation.

Guiding Questions

How will you address this essential condition?

- How are stakeholders identified or selected to support implementation?
- How are stakeholders engaged in supporting implementation?
- How are the diverse needs of stakeholders addressed to ensure community engagement?



Plans

What strategies, procedures and/or processes will you use to address this essential condition?



Note: Stakeholders will find *A Practical Guide to Conducting Surveys within Alberta's K-12 Education System* (Dec 2005) and *Encouraging Parent Involvement: Building the Learning Team* (2006) helpful as they intentionally address this essential condition.

Evidence

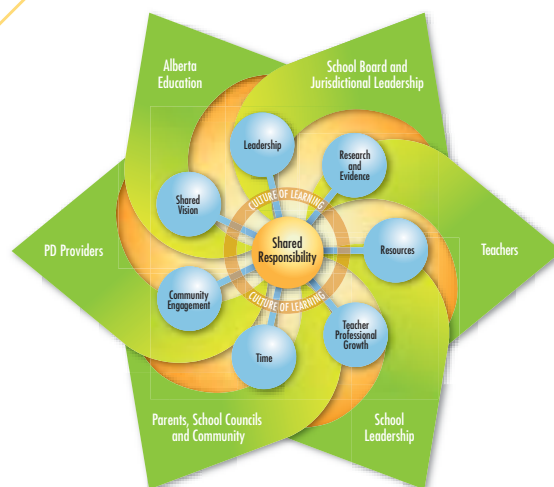
What will you accept as evidence that this essential condition is being addressed? Examples of evidence may include:

- Strategic plans are in place to engage community stakeholders in supporting implementation (e.g., stakeholders are involved in curriculum development; are consulted on the development of provincial frameworks and regional/local initiatives; participate in knowledge and skill development activities; and assist in implementation).
- Stakeholders communicate, collaborate, and establish partnerships and networks to support implementation.
- A record of community engagement (e.g., participation, representation and results) is collected.
- Case studies and/or vignettes describe how community involvement positively impacted implementation.



Implementation Planning Tool

Use the following table to identify key activities to address each essential condition and the specific roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder group.



ESSENTIAL CONDITION	KEY ACTIVITIES	STAKEHOLDERS ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES
Shared Vision		
Leadership		
Research and Evidence		
Resources		
Teacher Professional Growth		
Time		
Community Engagement		



Essential Conditions Self-Assessment

Use the following self-assessment template to identify where you are in terms of addressing the essential conditions for the successful implementation of your current curriculum, priority, policy, program or initiative. In the right hand column, describe the evidence you are using to support your self-assessment and your goals for further work to support implementation.

Name of educational change being implemented:

Timeframe for implementation (start and end dates):

ESSENTIAL CONDITION	DESCRIPTION	NOT YET	PARTLY	YES	EVIDENCE FOR OUR SELF-ASSESSMENT / GOAL FOR FURTHER WORK
Shared Vision	Stakeholders share an understanding of and commitment to the intended outcomes.				
Leadership	Leaders at all levels have the capacity to champion the shift from the current reality to the intended outcomes.				
Research and Evidence	Current research, evidence, and lessons learned inform implementation decisions.				
Resources	Human resources, materials, funding, and infrastructure are in place to realize the intended outcomes.				
Teacher Professional Growth	Teacher knowledge, skills and attributes are enhanced through ongoing professional learning.				
Time	Time is provided to support implementation.				
Community Engagement	Parents, school councils, students, community members, businesses, industry and post-secondary institutions are partners in supporting implementation.				

Implementation Strategies and Activities

When designing implementation support plans, including comprehensive professional learning programs, a broad range of activities need to be considered. Selection of activities should balance the needs of the individual, the school and the jurisdiction and be based on the policy, curricula, program, priority or initiative to be implemented. The following adult learning activities can be combined in various ways to support implementation.

Action research	Individual professional growth plans	Professional organizations
Book study	Integrated curriculum planning	Professional portfolios
Case study review	Internet research	Selecting curriculum resources
Classroom/school visitation	Journaling	Self-reflection
Collaborative curriculum development	Lesson study	Specialist council memberships
Conference audio tapes	Mentoring a colleague	Study groups
Conferences	Online curriculum network	Summer institutes
Curriculum mapping	Online PD programs	Teachers' conventions
Curriculum symposium	Peer coaching	Videoconferencing
Data analysis	Pod-casting	Viewing educational videos
Examining student work	Post-secondary courses	Webinars
Focused conversations	Professional books and journals	Workshops
Hosting a student teacher	Professional learning community	

Resources to Support Implementation Planning

Alberta Assessment Consortium (www.aac.ab.ca)
Alberta Education (www.education.gov.ab.ca)
Alberta Regional Professional Development Consortia (www.arpdc.ab.ca)
Alberta Teachers' Association (www.teachers.ab.ca)

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