**Readiness**

Measuring readiness is a systematic analysis of a school’s ability to undertake a transformational process or change.[[1]](#footnote-1) A readiness assessment identifies the potential challenges that might arise when implementing new procedures, structures, or processes. Furthermore, through the identification of the gaps within the existing organization, the readiness assessment provides an opportunity to remedy these gaps before, or as part of, the implementation plan.

The definition of readiness can vary depending on the organization or community, and type of change being instituted (i.e. changing workflows in a pediatric provider office, or implementing a tobacco free environment policy). Regardless of the issue or organization, readiness has some specific characteristics that are important to understand. The components below are taken from the Community Toolbox[[2]](#footnote-2):

* *Readiness is issue-specific.* A community can be more than ready to address one issue, while being at the very earliest stages of readiness in relation to another. It’s measurable. It’s measurable across multiple dimensions. Not only can you get an accurate assessment of community readiness, you can accurately measure where the community is on various elements of readiness.
* *Readiness can vary across dimensions.* A community may be more ready to address an issue in some ways than in others. A community may know a great deal about the issue and realize it’s a problem, but not be able to conceive a way to fix it.
* *Readiness can vary across different segments of the community.* Some groups – those directly affected by the issue, for example – may be far more ready to deal with it than others. Addressing the issue may have a logical progression.
* *Readiness is essential knowledge for addressing an issue.* You can easily doom an effort by trying to push a community into something it’s not ready for. People will only support what they see as reasonable, logical, beneficial and doable. You may be proposing something that is all of those, but if the community’s perception is otherwise, it is unlikely to fly.

An understanding of school and community readiness to support a school health initiative is vital to its success and sustainability. There are many well-documented competing pressures on schools. Attempting to institute policies, practices and procedures within a school that does not view health as a learning support will likely not sustain past their initial four years in the program. Additionally, imposing a change process on a school that is not open to change can cause harm; school staff and leaders may get burned out or become apathetic after a number of change attempts that do not stick, community partners may become frustrated when there is little to no change, and vitally important relationships may suffer.

1. US Department of Health and Human Services, HRSA. *Readiness Assessment and Developing Project Aims.* Available at http://www.hrsa.gov/quality/toolbox/methodology/readinessassessment/ [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. http://ctb.ku.edu/en [↑](#footnote-ref-2)