

Using the Hexagon Tool: A Case Study

The Hexagon Tool can be used by communities and organizations to better understand how a new or existing program or practice fits into an implementing site's existing work and context. The Hexagon Tool can be used at any stage of implementation to assess fit and feasibility. It is most commonly used during the Exploration stage when an implementing site is identifying and selecting new programs and practices to implement. For more information, please review the information on the AI Hub: <https://nirn.fpg.unc.edu/resources/hexagon-exploration-tool>.

Instructions:

This case study provides an example of a district using the Hexagon Tool to select an evidence-based reading curriculum/program.

- Review the case example and reflect on the data and information presented.
- Review the questions for each indicator of the Hexagon Tool.
- Using the data and information from the case study district, reflect on how you might answer the questions for each indicator.
- Given your responses to the questions, utilize the rubric to rank the practice or program by indicator.
- Be prepared to share your ranking.

Background Information:

- A large, urban public school district in the Northeast with 36,197 students within 64 schools
- Enrollment

Student Enrollment		
Grades	Enrollment	Percent of Total Enrollment
Pre-K	2,049	5.6%
K-8	24,491	67.8%
9-12	9,572	26.6%
Total Enrollment:	36,112	100.0%

- Race/ Ethnicity Data

Student Race & Ethnicity		
Race & Ethnicity	Enrollment	Percent of Total Enrollment
Black	15,508	42.9%
Hispanic	17,060	47.2%
White	3,044	8.4%
Asian	344	<1%
Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander	72	<1%
Native American	81	<1%
Two or More Races	*	<1%
Total Enrollment	36,112	100.0%

* Categories with fewer than 10 students are suppressed for privacy.

- Other Data

Family Income		
Meal Subsidy Status	Enrollment	Percent of Total Enrollment
Free Lunch ¹	26,569	73.6%
Reduced-Price Lunch	1,961	5.4%
Paid Lunch (Income Above Qualifying Threshold)	7,582	21.0%
Total Enrollment	36,112	100.0%

Additional Demographics		
Disability Classification	Enrollment	Percent of Total Enrollment
Special Education	5,969	16.6%
General Education	30,143	83.4%
Limited English Proficient	3,797	10.5%
Total Enrollment	36,112	

PARCC: Percent Met and Exceeded Expectations (Spring 2018)			
Subject	Grades 3-8	Grades 9-11	Overall
English Language Arts	34.8%	32.7%	34.2%
Mathematics	26.4%	14.5%	23.1%

Additional Student Outcomes (2017-2018)	
Measure	
Average Daily Attendance	90.1%
Percent of Students who were Chronically Absent (missing 10% or more of school days)	33.4%
Four-Year Graduation Rate	75.7%

Needs Assessment:

- Literacy scores have been declining for the past two years in grades 3, 5 and 6-8
- Students in Gr. 6-8 are of significant concern with 34% performing more than one grade level below expected
- SWD and black males are three times more likely than all other races to be performing grade level in reading/literacy
- The state has adopted new standards
- A root cause analysis revealed:
 - Ongoing need for systematic explicit instruction
 - No consistent recommendations for programs or practices for middle grade readers two or more years behind

- Vocabulary, inferencing and summarizing are identified as needing interventions in the middle grades for SWDs
- Middle grade/high school teachers are not provided literacy instruction on the science of reading or explicit reading instruction
- Coaching efforts prioritized in the elementary grades for literacy

Selected Literacy Program:

The state implementation team decided to evaluate the literacy program, *Journey to New Horizons (JNH)* with those districts selected for intensive literacy supports from the state.

JNH is a reading program designed for struggling readers who are reading 2 or more years below grade level. It provides blended learning instruction (i.e., combining digital media with traditional classroom instruction), student assessment, and teacher professional development. JNH is delivered in 45- to 90-minute sessions that include whole-group instruction, three small-group rotations, and whole-class wrap-up. Small-group rotations include individualized instruction using an adaptive computer application, small-group instruction with a teacher, and independent reading. JNH is designed for students in elementary through high school.

Evidence:

Researching JNH, the team discovered the following information:

- The What Works Clearinghouse (WWC):
 - Identified 9 studies of JNH that both fall within the scope of the Adolescent Literacy topic area and meet WWC group design standards.
 - 3 studies meet WWC group design standards without reservations, and 6 studies meet WWC group design standards with reservations.
 - studies included 8,755 adolescent readers in more than 66 schools in 15 school districts and 10 states with demographics similar to the districts.
 - The WWC considers the extent of evidence for JNH on the reading achievement of adolescent readers to be medium to large for four outcomes—comprehension, general literacy achievement, reading fluency, and alphabets.
- On the Evidence for ESSA site, researchers from the Center for Research and Reform in Education (CRRE) at the Johns Hopkins University School of Education have categorized JNH as a program demonstrating strong evidence—the highest ESSA rating.

In light of this information, please reflect on the questions for the ‘evidence’ indicator.

How would you rank the strength of evidence for JNH?

Supports:

The implementation team gathered the following information related to supports for the implementation of JNH. Supports include those available for developing organizational and systems readiness, engaging key stakeholders and decision-support data system

From the publisher:

- 2-day training for administrators and MTSS teams
- 5-day training for reading teachers over 2 months
- 1-day booster session
- Coaching Supports are not available
- Cost of trainings: \$500 per person
- Program manual available with theoretical foundation, components, and process for implementing. Includes data collection forms, lesson plans, goal setting guidelines, and sample promotional materials.
- Fidelity measure is available but deemed cumbersome to implement by the team

Available supports from the SEA:

- 2-day in person training for administrators and MTSS teams
- Three coaching observations of reading teachers and debrief sessions of observation results
- No costs for supports but must qualify for services based on low school performance

In light of this information, please reflect on the questions for the 'supports' indicator.

How would you rank the strength of supports for JNH?

Usability:

The implementation team researched the extent to which the EBP/EIP approach is well-defined.

Operationalized Principles

- Formulated Set of Beliefs and Principles

Core Components

- Identified components that describe actions of the teachers and students – explicit lesson plans
- Fidelity assessment – unsure of feasibility

Adaptations

- Limited guidance on adaptation to different contexts
- Has been used with various cultural populations (e.g., African American, Hispanic or Latino, and Native American or Alaska Indian) and in different settings (urban and rural) within the state with some success

In light of this information, please reflect on the questions for the 'usability' indicator.

How would you rank the strength of the usability of JNH?

Need:

The implementation team examined the data demonstrating the needs of the population and the EBP/EIP (see background information above).

In light of this information, please reflect on the questions for the 'need' indicator.

How would you rank the strength of the need for JNH?

Fit:

The implementation team examined the alignment of the EBP/EIP approach with site, local, state priorities and initiatives.

- Priorities
 - Goals within district strategic plan to increase the percentage of students proficient in reading in the middle grades
 - SEA has improving literacy proficiency within their state strategic plan overall
- Values
 - SEA and District have not ascertained data from parents and community specifically on values/ feeling of literacy development and levels of support provided by schools
- Existing Initiatives
 - One other program has been identified by the special education department for use with SWDs.
 - Early Warning Data System just installed; staff need training to identify students at risk
 - 2 regional consortiums have identified other reading programs to recommend

In light of this information, please reflect on the questions for the 'fit' indicator.

How would you rank the strength of the fit of JNH?

Capacity:

The implementation team researched the required staffing and administrative practices, and the district capacity for data input and analysis, and fidelity and outcome assessments.

- Workforce
 - 5 reading teachers to be identified from existing staff at two middle schools, job descriptions would need to be adjusted and time for role
 - Endorsement in reading instruction is needed
 - 2 staff currently available to serve as reading teachers – currently coaches
 - MS administrators need support in observation protocols
 - Current staff do not match students culturally or linguistically
- Financial Supports
 - Some Title funds and State Aid funds to support training activities
 - Additional funds needed to support hiring and changes to data system
- Organization Supports
 - Several school procedures need to be refined to support scheduling
 - Principal and Dean of Students participating in selection and implementation team

- Current data system would need to be altered to ensure right data is being collected
- Staff in need of training for the data system in addition to the program

In light of this information, please reflect on the questions for the 'capacity' indicator.

How would you rank the strength of the capacity of the district to implement JNH?