

# Enabling Conditions for Continuous Improvement in School Systems

More than ever before, school systems must be adaptive, resilient, and innovative to meet the needs of students in the COVID-19 context. When implemented thoughtfully, continuous improvement strategies can equip school leaders and educators with the tools they need in these uncertain times.

There are four organizational building blocks that can support school and district system capacity for continuous improvement, even amid periods of volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity:

## SHARED PURPOSE



A shared purpose should reflect the unique characteristics and circumstances of the community. In addition, a shared purpose should:

- Be student centered
- Prioritize equity
- Be codeveloped with differentiated roles
- Reflect a sense of urgency
- Maintain constancy of purpose

## CULTURE OF TRUST



A culture of mutual trust binds individuals together as they work to advance their shared purpose. Such a culture is characterized by:

- Relational trust
- Psychological safety
- Leaders who demonstrate vulnerability as they continuously improve their own work
- Support instead of mandates
- A shared belief in the organization's collective ability to achieve its goals

## STRUCTURES AND RESOURCES THAT FOSTER COLLABORATIVE WORK



Integrated structures and resources that facilitate joint work and collective learning for continuous improvement include:

- Protected time and norms for collaboration
- Sufficient and sustainable improvement resources
- Breaking down silos
- Data infrastructure
- Engagement practices

## PREPARATION AND MOBILIZATION OF IMPROVEMENT CAPACITIES



Individuals must be equipped with the capacities to engage in continuous improvement methods. Organizations must identify:

- The set of knowledge and skills for improvement
- Which staff need which skills
- A consistent and intentional professional learning strategy

The full report, *Enabling Conditions and Capacities for Continuous Improvement: A Framework for Measuring and Supporting Progress Towards the Goals of the Statewide System of Support*, provides more on the enabling conditions for continuous improvement at different levels of California's school system, and also articulates a framework for the set of capacities needed for continuous improvement at each level. The report and summary brief can be found here:

<https://edpolicyinca.org/publications/continuous-improvement-schools-covid-19-context>