Most educators have seen programs and initiatives come and go, often with little improvement to show for the effort. In many cases, the problem may not lie with the program but with faulty implementation. Before judging the effectiveness of a new initiative, education leaders need to look at actual changes in practice—the degree and fidelity with which staff are using the program. The Levels of Use interview tool enables leaders to diagnose the extent to which staff members are implementing a program and their level of expertise with it.

In a Nutshell

The Levels of Use is one of three components that make up the diagnostic dimensions of the Concerns-Based Adoption Model. Determining Levels of Use is done with the use of a series of questions that a facilitator asks a staff member.

The Levels of Use interview protocol enables educators to know not only the extent to which staff are using a new program but also whether individuals are at a beginning stage—still working through the challenges associated with grasping the program—or at a more advanced level, where he or she has expertise in using the program. With this knowledge, leaders can provide the support necessary to help all staff members use the program fully and effectively.

Eight Levels of Use

The Levels of Use tool consists of eight behavioral profiles that describe the actions that educators engage in as they become more familiar with and skilled in using a practice or adopting a change. The table provides a description and example of each level.

Level	Typical Statement
Nonuse	"I've heard about it but, honestly, I have too many other things to do right now."
Orientation	"I'm looking at materials pertaining to the innovation and considering using it sometime in the future."
Preparation	"I've attended the workshop and I've set aside time every week for studying the materials."
Mechanical Use	"Most of my time is spent organizing materials and keeping things going as smoothly as possible every day."
Routine Use	"This year it has worked out beautifully. I'm sure there will be a few changes next year, but basically I will use it the same way I did this year."
Refinement	"I recently developed a more detailed assessment instrument to gain more specific information from students to see where I need to change my use of the innovation."
Integration	"Not everyone has all the skills needed to use the program so that it has the greatest impact on student learning. I've been working with another teacher for 2 years, and recently a third teacher began working with us."
Renewal	"I am still interested in the program and using it with modifications. Frankly, I'm reading, talking, and even doing a little research to see whether some other approach might be better for the students."

Use and Application

What does the process involve?

Determining levels of use involves conducting focused interviews. If the process is intended to gather district- or school-level information, an educator may conduct a series of brief interviews to determine individual staff members' level of use of a program or practice.

If the process is intended for research purposes, interviewers need to be certified to conduct the full Levels of Use Interview and to assure reliability and validity of the data. Contact SEDL at services@sedl.org for information about certification.

SEDL recommends that an organization develop and widely distribute an Innovation Configuration Map (another of the three CBAM diagnostic dimensions) prior to conducting Levels of Use interviews. A fully developed Innovation Configuration Map provides the people responsible for implementing a new program with a clear vision of what it looks like in action. This vision is essential for effective implementation.

How are the data are used?

Once interviewers have gathered data on staff members' Levels of Use, the data can be compared to the Stages of Concern data, which enables leaders to identify staff members' attitudes about a new initiative. The comparison of Levels of Use and Stages of Concern data provides a full picture of implementation. Leaders can then plan appropriate action steps to move staff members from rudimentary levels of implementation to more sophisticated and effective use of a program.

Research Base

The Levels of Use component was developed as part of the Concerns-Based Adoption Model in the 1970s and 1980s by a team of researchers at the Research and Development Center for Teacher Education at the University of Texas at Austin. Since its development, researchers have tested CBAM for reliability and validity; in 2006, it was updated to ensure its accuracy. Today, CBAM continues to be applied in a range of school, organizational, and research settings. The tools are commonly used to help leaders, evaluators, and researchers understand, monitor, and guide the complex process of implementing new and innovative practices. The following resources will be of help in learning more about Levels of Use and other elements of the Concerns-Based Adoption Model.

Hall, G. E., Wallace, R. C., & Dossett, W. A. (1973). *A developmental conceptualization of the adoption process within educational institutions*. Austin, TX: Research and Development Center for Teacher Education, The University of Texas at Austin.

Hord, S. M., Stiegelbauer, A. M., Hall, G. E., & George, A. A. (2006). *Measuring implementation in schools: Innovation configurations*. Austin, TX: SEDL.

Hall, G.E., & Hord, S.M. (2011). *Implementing change: Patterns, principles and potholes (3rd edition)*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

Contact Information

SEDL provides a range of resources and services to support the Concerns-Based Adoption Model. Contact us at services@sedl.org to discuss how we can best serve your needs.

About SEDL

SEDL is a private, nonprofit education research, development, and dissemination corporation based in Austin, Texas. Our mission is to strengthen the connections among research, policy, and practice in order to improve outcomes for all learners.