

# *Playing the Game:* **Player Instructions**

## **Object of the Game**

**Y**ou are a member of a team appointed by the superintendent of the Verifine School District to help change the school district into a continuously improving learning community. A *continuously improving* community is one that systematically plans, implements, and monitors its progress to benefit all learners and to meet the needs of stakeholders such as parents and the business community. A *learning community* is created when people work together to create the results they desire, think and work in truly innovative ways, and are continually learning how to learn together. (Senge, 1990)

You have three years to accomplish the goals of the game. They are:

- To move most members of the school and community represented on the gameboard through the stages of becoming a learning community — from Awareness to Renewal.
- To produce as many learner benefits (*Bens*) as you can.

The assumptions for your playing team are:

- You have the permission of the superintendent to plan but do not yet have his broad support nor the commitment of the district and community members.
- The people in the community (player pieces represented on the gameboard) that you need to influence know nothing about your task.
- You have just begun to focus on the goals of the game and have three school years to accomplish as much as you can.

Because this is a simulation based on real life, there is no final point or end to the game.

## **The School Community**

The Verifine School Community includes an administrative staff and school board, a K-5 school, a 6-8 middle school, and a 9-12 high school. It is a community that has tried many innovations in the past with mixed success. It has a diverse student population and community.

The staff, students, parents, and community members of the school community are described on *People Cards* (see below). The administration is represented by one school board member, a superintendent, an assistant superintendent, and a community member. The K-5 school includes a principal, teachers, and a parent. The middle school includes a principal, teachers, a student, and a parent. The high school is represented by a principal, teachers, other staff, a student, and a parent.

## **Parts of the Game**

- **Player Instructions:** this sheet describes how to play the game.
- **Gameboard:** the board lists the representative people from the school community and contains a grid of the stages of becoming a learning community from Awareness to Renewal that player pieces will move across during the game, skipping over the shaded spaces.
- **People Cards:** describe people on the gameboard.
- **Player Pieces:** each of the people on the gameboard is represented by a player piece. The pieces are moved as the game progresses.

- **Activity Sheet:** this describes all the possible moves your team can make in the game.
- **40 Plastic Bits:** these are your resources for one year of play.
- **Strategy Record Sheet:** a record of all your team moves during the game.
- **Progress Record:** a record of the progress you make with the people on the gameboard.
- **Feedback Cards:** cards you will receive from the facilitator that tell you the results of your moves and may contain information and hints.
- **Bens:** numerical rewards listed on the *Feedback Cards* that your team earns as you make systemwide changes in the community.

## To Play

1. Read about the people in the Verifine School Community on the *People Cards*.
2. Select a recorder for your team.
3. With your team, review the *Activity Sheet* and decide on an activity as your team's first move and which people on the gameboard will be involved in the activity, if required. Remember, a team may conduct only one activity at a time. You may conduct the activities in any order you wish, although activities #21 through #26 may only be done in Year Two and Year Three of the simulation.

As you discuss your possible activity choices, you should read the description carefully to make sure you understand what it entails. Then decide, as you would in real life, what your best tactic would be.

4. Record your team's move (the activity number and name) on the *Strategy Record Sheet*. Begin recording in the first space and use one line for each new move. Keeping track of what you do will help you reflect on and learn from your successes and failures.
5. Write the initials of the people you choose to do the activity in the third column of the *Strategy Record Sheet*, Participants' Initials (Who), for example, A (for Al). (If you do not need to select people, leave the third column blank.) Please write legibly as the facilitator will need to be able to read your *Strategy Record Sheet* in order to decide the appropriate feedback for your activity.
6. Count out the number of plastic *Bits* required to do the activity. (You have 40 *Bits* to spend each school year.)
7. Have one team member take your *Strategy Record Sheet*, *Progress Record*, and the *Bits* to the facilitator.
8. The facilitator will give you a *Feedback Card* based on your team's activity choice and the progress of the people on the board. Bring the *Feedback Card* from the facilitator back to your team.
9. Discuss and record the results you get on the *Strategy Record Sheet*.
10. Move the player pieces as indicated on the *Feedback Card*. **Skip over the shaded spaces on the board when moving Player Pieces.**
11. If your team receives *Bens* for doing the activity, record the number in the fifth column of the *Strategy Record Sheet*. At the end of the game the team will tally their *Bens*.
12. Indicate the individuals' new stage position on the board in the *Progress Record* if it has changed.
13. Choose your team's next activity/move and repeat steps three through six.
14. Return the *Feedback Card* to the facilitator and get a new *Feedback Card* for the next move.

## Time

The time will be divided into three segments to represent three school years. The facilitator will signal when each year begins and ends.

**HANDOUT #2**

*Playing the Game:*  

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*Activity Sheet*

*Systems Thinking/Systems Changing*

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## *Playing the Game:*

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### **Activity Sheet**

**A**s a team, decide which activities will help you create a continuously improving learning community in your school district. Each activity below is a separate move; you can make only one move at a time. You can repeat any activity at any time, except Gather Social Information.

#### **Years 1, 2, and 3 Activities:**

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##### **1. ASSESS DISTRICT'S SUCCESS**

Assess the district's success in meeting a variety of local, state, and national learning standards and how the community culture and climate supports and/or impedes that success.

*Choose: 8 people*

*Cost: 4 Bits*

##### **2. SURVEY STAKEHOLDERS**

Survey the needs and concerns of both internal and external stakeholders in the school system (staff, students, parents, and other stakeholders).

*Cost: 4 Bits*

##### **3. GATHER SOCIAL INFORMATION**

Identify informal relationship/communication patterns of people in the school community.

*Cost: 1 Bit*

##### **4. TALK WITH STAFF, STUDENTS, PARENTS, AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS**

Have individual conversations with people to introduce the idea of building a continuously improving learning community.

*Choose: 3 people*

*Cost: 2 Bits*

##### **5. TALK WITH AGAIN**

Have follow-up conversations with individual people to further discuss their questions, needs, and concerns.

*Choose: 3 people*

*Cost: 2 Bits*

##### **6. CREATE A SHARED VISION**

At a retreat for administration, staff, parents, and community representatives develop personal visions and begin to create a shared vision of the ideal graduate and learning environment. Participants do a self assessment to identify their values, skills, and knowledge.

*Cost: 8 Bits*

##### **7. ASSESS PROBLEMS AND PROCESSES OF SCHOOL COMMUNITY**

Use tools to systematically collect and analyze information about the district's problems and processes to get a systems' view and to identify high priority opportunities for improvement.

*Choose: 8 people*

*Cost: 4 Bits*

##### **8. COMPARE VISION TO CURRENT REALITY**

Compare vision to current reality and identify gaps and prioritize opportunities for improvement.

*Choose: 8 people*

*Cost: 3 Bits*

##### **9. DEVELOP A LONG-RANGE PLAN THAT LINKS ACTIVITIES TO VISION**

Develop a long-range plan that links activities to vision and shows who will do what, when and the indicators that will be used to monitor progress toward reaching the vision.

*Choose: 10 people*

*Cost: 5 Bits*

## Years 1, 2, and 3 Activities (continued):

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### **10. DEVELOP A SYSTEMWIDE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

Develop a systemwide professional development plan that includes a plan for individual and team learning opportunities.

*Choose: 8 people*

*Cost: 5 Bits*

### **11. CONDUCT QUALITY TOOLS TRAINING**

Conduct staff training to use quality tools (such as Brainstorming, Flow Charts, Check Sheets, and Nominal Group Technique) that help to systematically identify critical or root problems and processes and to help solve those problems.

*Choose: 8 people*

*Cost: 3 Bits*

### **12. DOCUMENT SUCCESSES AND FAILURES AND SHARE LEARNINGS**

Document successes and failures you have experienced in implementing the changes in your district and share the learning so everyone in the system can learn from past experiences.

*Cost: 2 Bits*

### **13. PROVIDE SYSTEMWIDE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

Provide district-wide professional development opportunities on priority areas, including learning/teaching strategies.

*Cost: 4 Bits*

### **14. CREATE/MAINTAIN IMPROVEMENT TEAMS**

Create and maintain cross-functional, interdisciplinary improvement teams to work on priority issues.

*Choose: 8 people*

*Cost: 6 Bits*

### **15. DEVELOP TEAMWORK SKILLS**

Develop teamwork skills for people in the school community, including facilitation, communication, and use of dialogue skills.

*Choose: 8 people*

*Cost: 3 Bits*

### **16. IMPLEMENT NEW LEARNING/TEACHING STRATEGIES**

Implement new learning/teaching strategies to enhance student and community learning.

*Choose: 8 people*

*Cost: 4 Bits*

### **17. COMMUNICATE VISION**

Communicate your vision for the school community to all stakeholders.

*Cost: 1 Bit*

### **18. MODEL EFFECTIVE PRACTICES**

Model effective practices in your everyday work.

*Cost: 2 Bits*

### **19. CHECK ACTIVITIES AGAINST VISION AND EFFECTIVENESS OF PLAN/IMPLEMENTATION**

Review the activities in your plan to make sure they will help you to reach your vision. Monitor implementation of the plan to see if it is being implemented as designed and is giving the desired results.

*Choose: 8 people*

*Cost: 3 Bits*

### **20. REFLECT WITH COLLEAGUES**

Using teamwork skills, staff reflect, support, question, and challenge their own and others' mental models and assumptions.

*Choose: 8 people*

*Cost: 2 Bits*

***See back for Years 2 and 3 Only Activities***

## Years 2 and 3 Only Activities:

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### **21. BENCHMARK BEST PRACTICES FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING**

Identify communities that are using best practices for learning and teaching. Compare your systems' processes to theirs and plan how you could achieve their results.

*Choose: 8 people*

*Cost: 6 Bits*

### **22. CHANGE SUPPORT SYSTEMS TO SUPPORT VISION**

Change support systems such as rewards, policies, student assessment, and resource allocation mechanisms to support vision.

*Choose: 8 people*

*Cost: 6 Bits*

### **23. BUILD IN-HOUSE CAPACITY TO PROVIDE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

Build in-house capacity to provide ongoing professional development opportunities and develop leadership skills.

*Choose: 8 people*

*Cost: 8 Bits*

### **24. COMMUNICATE PROGRESS**

Give presentations of quality improvement process to members of school and community using visuals to display data.

*Cost: 2 Bits*

### **25. REVISIT/REVISE VISION**

Revisit and revise vision periodically to match current thinking.

*Choose: 10 people*

*Cost: 5 Bits*

### **26. REVISE PLAN BASED ON CURRENT REALITY**

Revise plan based on current reality. Make changes in plan and learning and teaching strategies based on latest information about stakeholder needs.

*Choose: 8 people*

*Cost: 4 Bits*

**HANDOUT #3**

## Strategy Record Sheet

**A**fter your team decides on an activity, write down the activity number and name in the second column below. Begin recording in the first line and use one line for each new move. When a new school year begins, write the year number in the first column. Documenting what you do will help you reflect on and learn from your successes and failures.

Write the initials of the people you choose to do the activity in the third column, Participants' Initials (Who), for example, A (for Al). (If you do not need to select people, leave the third column blank.) Please write legibly as the facilitator will need to be able to read your *Strategy Record Sheet* in order to decide the appropriate feedback for your activity.

YEAR	ACTIVITY (WHAT) NUMBER/NAME	PARTICIPANTS' INITIALS (WHO)	FEEDBACK AND RESULTS	# BENS
1				

**Total number of people in each stage:**

Awareness	Preparation	Practice	Mastery/Integration	Renewal

**Subtotal # of BENS:** \_\_\_\_\_







**H A N D O U T # 4**

# Progress Record

		S T A G E				
		AWARENESS	PREPARATION	PRACTICE	MASTERY / INTEGRATION	RENEWAL
<b>ADMIN</b>	Al					
	Beth					
	Carla					
	Dave					
<b>ELEMENTARY SCHOOL</b>	Eve					
	Fern					
	Gary					
	Hazel					
	Irene					
<b>MIDDLE SCHOOL</b>	Juanita					
	Ken					
	LaDonna					
	Mia					
	Noriko					
<b>HIGH SCHOOL</b>	Owen					
	Pat					
	Q.T.					
	Ray					
	Su Ling					
	Thelma					
	Upton					
	Velma					
	Will					
	Xavier					

# Social Information

**A**s you've gone around the district talking to people, you've picked up information, such as who talks to whom, who people think of as informal leaders, whose opinions are respected. You start asking people informally whose opinion they trust on curriculum matters, who they think are the strong people in the school community. You decide that this information may come in handy one day, so you develop sociograms to show the influential people and their followers.

This sociogram shows the influential people in the school community and their followers:

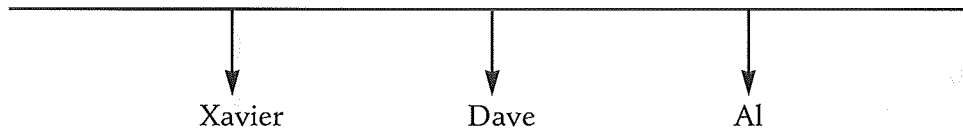
***Eve Excel, a highly respected school administrator***



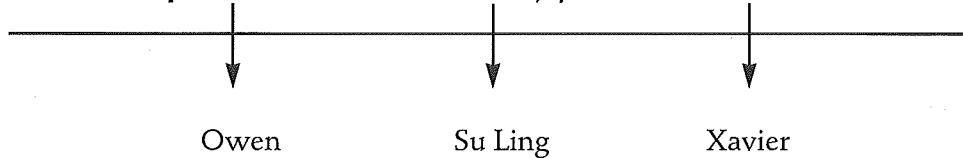
***Juanita Jemm, a visionary leader who is trusted by many***



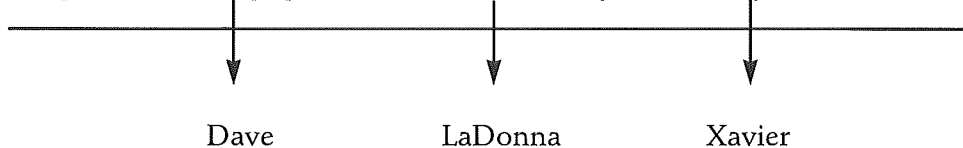
***Noriko Noble, a community leader who is on many committees***



***Ray Rhodes, an excellent teacher and local teacher union representative who has many friends in the school***



***Upton Ultra, a popular student who is often asked for his advice***



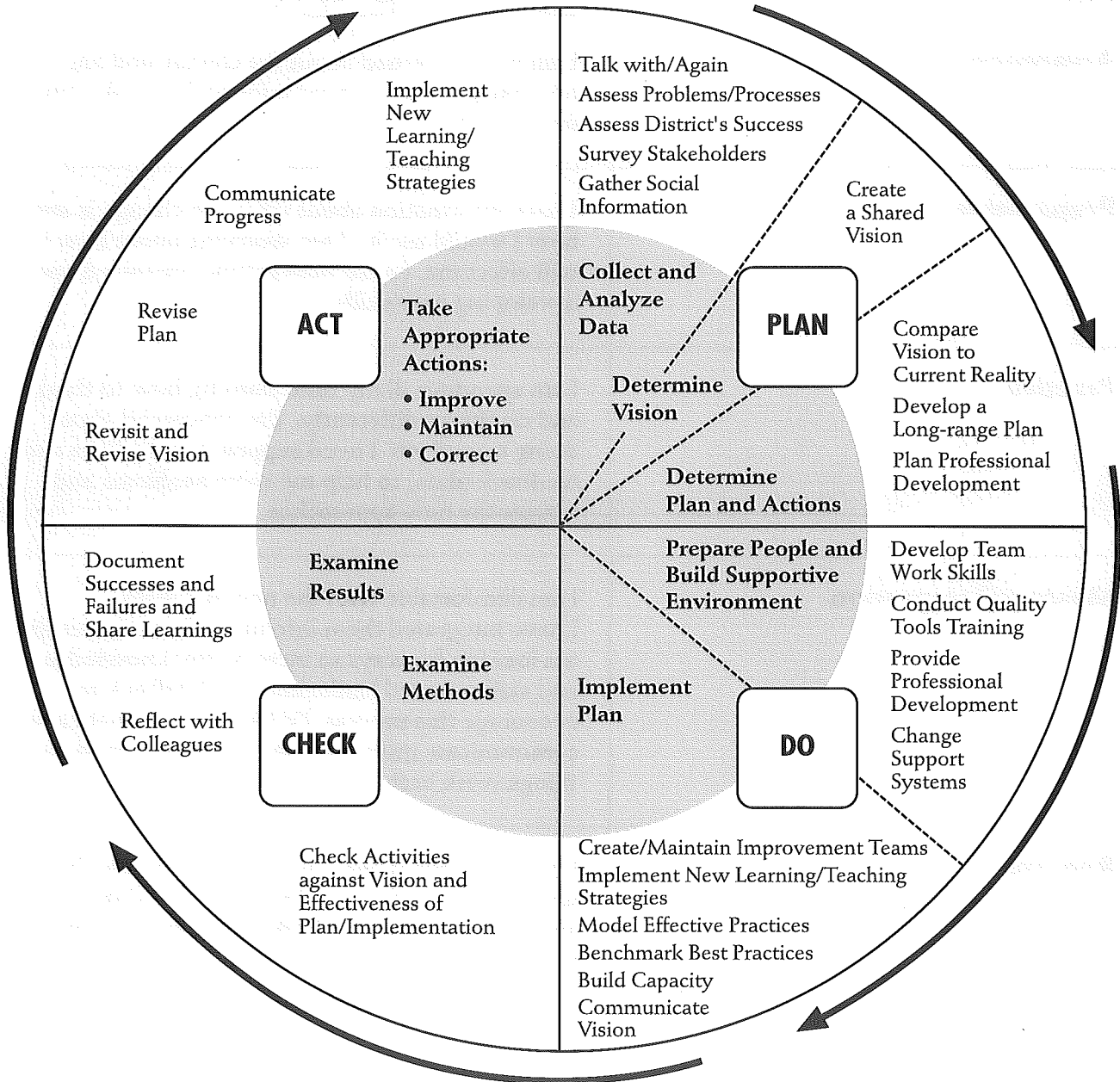
# Stages of Change

STAGES OF CHANGE	WHAT INDIVIDUALS SAY AND WANT AT THIS STAGE
<b>Awareness</b>	I am not concerned about the change and am not taking action. I need information to develop my interest.
<b>Preparation</b>	I have information about what the change is and how I would use it. I am worrying about how it will affect me. I need help getting organized and developing new skills.
<b>Practice</b>	I am spending all my time learning how to think and do things differently. I'm concerned about doing a good job. I need support to take risks and feedback (data) to help me solve problems and master the new approaches.
<b>Mastery/Integration</b>	I am comfortable with the new practices. I have integrated them into my daily activities and am looking for ways to increase my knowledge and skills. I need leadership and feedback to encourage this process. I'd like to coordinate and communicate more with my colleagues to make things work best.
<b>Renewal</b>	I have new plans that I want to implement that will improve outcomes. I need current data and help planning and building support for my new ideas.

Adapted with permission from Hall and Loucks, *Implementing Innovations in Schools: A Concerns-Based Approach*. Austin, TX. University of Texas. 1979

**HANDOUT #13**

**Plan, Do, Check, Act Cycle  
and Simulation Activities**



## HANDOUT #14

# Sequence of Activities *and* Plan, Do, Check, Act Cycle

PLAN			DO			CHECK	ACT
#2 Survey Stakeholders (1,2)			#15 Develop Team Work Skills (3,4,5,6)			#20 Reflect with Colleagues (4,5,6,7,8,9,10)	
#3 Gather Social Information (1,2)	#1 Assess District's Success (3)			#14 Create/Maintain Improvement Teams (4,5,6)			#24 Communicate Progress (9,10)
		#7 Assess Problems and Processes of School Community (5)	#11 Conduct Quality Tools Training (4)		#18 Model Effective Practices (8,9)		
#4 Talk with Staff, Students, Parents, and Other Stakeholders (1)	#5 Talk with Again (2)	#10 Develop a Systemwide Professional Development Plan (4,5)	#13 Provide System-wide Professional Development Opportunities (5,6)	#21 Benchmark Best Practices for Learning and Teaching (8,9)	#16 Implement New Learning/Teaching Strategies (7,8,9,10)	#12 Document Successes and Failures and Share Learnings (8)	
	#6 Create a Shared Vision (3,4)	#8 Compare Vision to Current Reality (6)	#17 Communicate Vision (4)		#23 Build In-house Capacity to Provide Professional Development Opportunities (9)	#19 Check Activities Against Vision and Effectiveness of Plan/Implementation (8)	#25 Revisit/Revise Vision (10)
		#9 Develop a Long-Range Plan That Links Activities to Vision (7)			#22 Change Support Systems to Support Vision (9)		#26 Revise Plan Based on Current Reality (10)

Number in parentheses indicates possible sequence of activities.

# Components of Successful Change



## **Effective Leadership**

- Support and leadership of key people
- Leaders use systems thinking
- Leaders model effective practices
- Formal and informal leaders influence others
- Leaders help create a shared vision

## **Attention to People**

- People move through stages of change
- People need different activities at different points in the change process
- Ongoing communication is essential
- Critical mass of stakeholder support necessary for change
- Focus on learning and personal mastery for both staff and students
- Effective teamwork/team learning requires team work skills
- Representative teams are needed to reflect stakeholder needs

## **Using Systems Thinking**

- Involve representatives of all stakeholders in system
- Create a shared vision
- Change underlying support systems to support vision
- Most effective improvements are based on systemwide view
- Create opportunities to share assumptions and understand how actions/choices reflect our assumptions/beliefs about system
- Identify and use high-leverage activities — those with the greatest payoff

## **Using and Understanding Processes**

- Change is a process
- Change takes time and persistence
- Choices/decisions are driven by current data, successes and failures
- Continuously improving organizations use a cycle of change that moves from Planning to Doing to Checking to Acting.
- Reflection and revision of plans are essential to the change process

# Bringing It Home



## Effective Leadership

- Take a minute to think about the people in your district/community. Who are the leaders in your community and how can you get them involved in promoting continuous improvement? As a formal or informal leader, how might you promote improvements and model systems thinking back home?
- To what extent do you have the competence in your organization to carry out the new roles of leaders? What is needed to build such leadership in your organization?

## Role of People in the Change Process

- In what ways could you gather and share information among all stakeholders? How do you assess the needs and interests of others in your organization? Do you know who talks with and influences whom? How might you use this information to convene teams and taskforces? What mechanisms do you have for identifying sources of resistance and creating opportunities to have dialogue about resistance?

## Using Systems Thinking

- Think about these same elements in your own community. For example, who or what drives systems change in your community? What systemwide activities have you already implemented and how effective have they been? What else needs to be done? How can you create the leadership and stakeholder involvement needed to drive systemic change?
- What type of thinking and analysis is done in your organization? To what extent do people use systems thinking in which events, patterns, interrelationships and mental models or assumptions and beliefs are analyzed and explored? What are your ideas for increasing the use of systems thinking in your organization?

## Using and Understanding the Process of Change

- Think about what stages of change people in your own community are in with regard to a particular change or new practice. What could you do in your community to involve and help people advance along the stages of change?
- What is the balance of planning and doing and checking and learning from actions in your own community? Does your community routinely evaluate the results of its actions and incorporate these into new actions? Does your community benchmark and learn from other organizations? How can you do more of these important activities to develop into a continuously learning community?



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