



SPREADING SCHOOL-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS: LESSONS FROM ExpandedED SCHOOLS



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Summary of Evaluation Findings

The ExpandED Schools national demonstration—with support from the Wallace Foundation—was implemented in Baltimore, New Orleans, and New York City from 2011-12 through 2015-16. In ExpandED Schools, schools partner with community-based organizations to design a tailored plan for implementing a balanced, well-rounded curriculum in an expanded day.

Policy Studies Associates explored lessons learned from the ExpandED Schools demonstration about strategies that best promote the spread—or diffusion—of school-community partnerships within new schools, partner organizations, and systems. These strategies are summarized below.

Promote Diffusion Through Intentional Planning

1. Create a clear roadmap for diffusion that accounts for local context.

Articulate the core components of the school-community partnership, allowing for adaptations that will occur based on the unique partnership history and policy contexts of each context. ExpandED Schools operationalized the core elements of strategic partnership for expanded learning, worked closely with the demonstration schools to pilot implementation, and over time refined the elements and expectations for what was flexible and what was foundational.

2. Frame the approach to reflect existing core values and priorities.

Compatibility accelerates dissemination. One of the critical initial judgments that practitioners make about whether to adopt a new approach is the extent to which the new approach is compatible with existing programs. Making explicit the links and commonalities to ongoing efforts can encourage adoption and buy-in to new approaches.

3. Offer facilitation and resources to support adoption and spread.

In ExpandED Schools, giving staff of both the school and partner organization training and concrete tools promoted spread within schools and throughout systems. These supports can evolve over time as the partnership matures, and include resource guides, data, and facilitation.

Create Deliberate Communication Networks

4. Engage decision-makers at the school and partner organization.

Principals set the overall tone of the implementation of new approaches, open the door to partner involvement, and shape partnerships to best meet the needs of the school. Teachers can often maintain a higher level of commitment to partnership than the principal alone. Partnership also needs to be supported by staff with explicit responsibility for the school-community partnership.

In ExpandED Schools, each school's partnership was managed by a director who was the main point of contact between the community organization and school.

5. Identify change agents and champions in systems.

System-level champions provide critical support for diffusion of new approaches. In the ExpandedED Schools demonstration, intermediary organizations provided a sustained focus on implementation quality and professional development to both school and partner organization staff. School system can also facilitate spread of school-community partnership initiatives, for example through offices and staff dedicated to supporting partnership.

6. Share lessons learned about what works—and what doesn't work.

Sharing lessons learned within schools and partner organizations, and a willingness to make changes based on these lessons, strengthens school-community partnerships and implementation of new approaches rooted in these partnerships. Intermediary organizations and school systems can apply lessons learned to make system-wide decisions on supports and policies.

Advocate for Supportive Policy Structures

7. Provide incentives within the accountability structure.

System messages on the importance of school-community partnerships need to be actively reinforced with support in order for partnerships to gain traction and spread, including through training and accountability for leaders to effectively use partners in improvement efforts.

8. Acknowledge and address systemic operational or policy barriers.

Spreading a new school-community approach requires anticipating and addressing systemic barriers that may prevent adoption, and identifying the resources needed to support the new approach. In ExpandedED Schools, these barriers included access to transportation, staffing policies (including collective bargaining agreements), and data sharing and access policies.

9. Provide a vision and plan for sustainability.

Schools and organizations are unlikely to embrace a change initiative if they are unsure of the quality and impact of the initiative or if they doubt their ability to sustain it. Flexible funding can promote sustainability. System leaders can help to create a vision and plan for how to access and efficiently braid available funding sources to support new approaches. ExpandedED Schools developed resources to guide braided and leveraged funded in the national demonstration.

Strategies from the Evaluation of the ExpandedED Schools National Demonstration

Action Steps to Promote Spread of School-Community Partnerships

Emerging from the evaluation of ExpandedED Schools national demonstration, conducted by Policy Studies Associates, are 10 action steps for stakeholders at both the system and the school level that can support the diffusion of strong school-community partnerships.

These action steps are iterative throughout the lifecycle of a partnership. Some steps require all stakeholders in a partnership to take action; in other steps, certain stakeholders have primary responsibility. Combined, the experiences of ExpandedED Schools suggest that these action steps can strengthen the dynamic interactions between all who adopt and support approaches to improve education through partnership.



Action Step	Stakeholders
Anticipate variation by context and prior partnership experience	N
Articulate the non-negotiable and flexible components of the approach	O N
Identify and communicate the commonalities of the new approach with existing programs and policies.	S D O C N
Get buy-in from change agents at the school and community partner.	S D O C N
Facilitate partnership meetings.	O
Create concrete tools to support and guide partnership development.	D O N
Share lessons about what works.	S D O C N
Identify system-level champions.	D O N
Support flexible use of leveraged funds.	D O N
Create policy incentives for adoption of the approach.	D O

Spreading School-Community Partnerships: Lessons from ExpandED Schools

Draft for ExpandED Schools Review

The ExpandED Schools national demonstration—with support from several funders including the Wallace Foundation—was implemented in 12 schools from Baltimore, New Orleans, and New York City between the 2011-12 through 2015-16 school years. ExpandED Schools offer students more time for a balanced, well-rounded curriculum that supports individualized learning through school-community partnerships. In the ExpandED Schools approach, schools partner with community-based organizations to design a tailored plan for implementing high-quality, academic and enrichment learning opportunities guided by the core elements of the ExpandED Schools approach. In addition, a local intermediary organization provides support and technical assistance to the school and to community partners.¹ Throughout the demonstration, ExpandED Schools also provided supports to school- and system-level partners sharing the goal of refining and advocating for an effective, scalable, and sustainable approach to expanded learning.

Policy Studies Associates (PSA) partnered with ExpandED Schools over the five years of the national demonstration to conduct an external evaluation. Early years of the evaluation focused on the fidelity of implementation to the approach, and examined early effects on the academic mindsets of students. The evaluation also studied the scale and sustainability of the ExpandED Schools approach within the national demonstration schools, particularly how the schools adapted core elements and the functions and roles supporting implementation (Russell, Hildreth, & Stevens, 2016; Sinclair et al., 2013; Sinclair, Russell, McCann, & Hildreth, 2014).

Over the course of the demonstration, the evaluation produced findings to inform ExpandED Schools as it refined its approach and developed resources to support the spread of expanded learning opportunities within and beyond the demonstration schools. These evaluation findings focused primarily on the successes and barriers that schools and partners faced in adopting and sustaining the ExpandED Schools approach and in scaling it within their organizations. For the final year of the national demonstration, the evaluation examined lessons learned throughout the demonstration to determine which strategies best promote the spread—or diffusion—of the ExpandED Schools approach within and across schools, partner organizations, and systems. This evaluation explored both what was learned from the implementation of the national demonstration and, based on the experiences of interviewed stakeholders, what would likely be required to spread the ExpandED Schools approach to school-community partnership to other schools or systems in the future.

This report highlights the practical lessons emerging from the evaluation of ExpandED Schools about what it takes to spread a school-community partnership initiative.²

¹ More details about the ExpandED Schools approach and core elements are available in Appendix A.

² Evaluation methodology is presented in Appendix B.

Framing this Report

The primary goal of the ExpandedED Schools national demonstration was to test implementation of the approach and to learn about conditions that facilitated implementation of strategic school-community partnerships to expand the school day. As such, much of the focus and effort of ExpandedED Schools was directed at the participating schools, community partner organizations, and intermediary organizations with goal of building capacity to support the development and sustainability of effective school-community partnerships over time. As noted above, prior evaluation reports emphasized the factors that facilitated or hindered implementation of the ExpandedED Schools approach, and the implications for the sustainability of the approach within adopting schools. Although broad-scale spread of the ExpandedED Schools approach was not the short-term goal of this national demonstration, this evaluation report applies findings from the national demonstration to explore which conditions or activities are likely to facilitate more widespread adoption of the ExpandedED Schools partnership approach.

The report is organized around three action steps through which the groundwork for diffusion is laid at each level of the school-community partner system, summarized in the box below. The findings reflect both the retrospective reflections of interviewed stakeholders on the operation of the national demonstration and prospective ideas on what would be required for spread to occur.

Key Actors in the ExpandedED Schools School-Community Partnership	
Organization name/type	National demonstration role
National level	
ExpandedED Schools	Designer and manager of the ExpandedED Schools national demonstration.
System Level	
Intermediary organization	Local organization that serves as the fiscal agent for national demonstration schools and plays the leading role in supporting schools in program implementation. The Family League of Baltimore, the Partnership for Youth Development (New Orleans), and ExpandedED Schools (New York and New Orleans) served as intermediary organizations for the national demonstration. *
School system	The local school district for Baltimore and New York City demonstration schools and the local charter management organization (CMO) for New Orleans.
School Level	
Community partner organization	The youth-serving, nonprofit organization that serves as a lead partner to the ExpandedED School, bringing resources, staffing, and other supports.
School	School implementing the ExpandedED Schools approach.

* The Partnership for Youth Development served as the intermediary organization for New Orleans for the 2011-12 through 2013-14 school years. ExpandedED Schools served as the intermediary for the 2014-15 and 2015-16 school years.

- Promote diffusion through intentional planning
- Create deliberate communication networks
- Advocate for supportive policy structures

For each of these, using evidence from the national demonstration, the report:

- Describes steps that systems, schools, and partners can take to plan for, facilitate, and sustain the adoption and dissemination of new approaches
- Reflects on the overarching lessons of school-community partnership through the lens of an established research-based diffusion framework

The report concludes with 10 action steps that each stakeholder group can take to plan for the diffusion of a partnership-based educational improvement effort.

Promote Diffusion Through Intentional Planning

Planning for diffusion requires those involved to consider the context of the places and the organizations in which new approaches will be implemented, and the extent to which the characteristics of the new approaches will align with existing norms. Intentional planning entails identifying opportunities to align new approaches with existing organizational goals and practices or to contrast old practices with new ones to show the relative advantage of making changes. The better the planning, the better the chances that the new approaches will succeed and promote diffusion.

The ExpandedED Schools national demonstration intended to model an approach that would spread to local and national systems

Support for implementation in demonstration schools + Complementary advocacy work =

Spread of ExpandedED Schools' approach within schools and across local and national systems

1. Create a clear roadmap for diffusion that accounts for local context.

In the national demonstration, ExpandedED Schools supported diffusion not only **within** the demonstration schools and partner organizations by offering supports and technical assistance for implementation, but **across** systems through its advocacy work complementing and building on the experiences of the demonstration schools.

It's less a pristine, pure model that ends up getting franchised and replicated, as much as it is a body of work and a set of practices that I think are starting to travel pretty widely, and hopefully gain audience and traction in places across the country.

– National Education Leader

Articulate the core components and the flexible elements of the approach. Clearly articulating the practices that are at the core of the school-community partnership is an essential first step to diffusion. In the national demonstration, ExpandedED Schools created a rubric, in collaboration with the PSA evaluation team, to operationalize the core elements of strategic partnership for expanded learning, worked closely with the demonstration schools to pilot implementation, and over time refined the elements and expectations for what was flexible and what was founda-

tional to the approach. One principal noted that this articulation of the approach was key to successful dissemination:

It has to be careful messaging; it has to be purposeful messaging. It is not like you can say, 'All schools are ExpandedED' and wave your magic wand. An ExpandedED School is a specific thing of quality programming supported by a partnership of academics and enrichment, and at a scale of 80, 85, 90 percent of the kids. You cannot have 25 kids with fitness, fun, and games for an extra three hours and say, 'We have ExpandedED.'

Context matters. ExpandedED Schools' advocacy and dissemination approaches focused on changing the conversation about the role of community partner organizations and the use of time in schools. Leaders from schools, community organizations, and national organizations highlighted the role that the ExpandedED Schools approach had played in shaping their view of how school-community partnerships could be strategically used to help support school improvement efforts. Although respondents from all three participating cities noted improvement in the nature and quality of school-community partnerships as a result of participating in the ExpandedED Schools demonstration, collaboration in each city was affected by the partnership history and education policy contexts of its local community.

In New York City and Baltimore, demonstration schools gained from having other partnership-based, after-school initiatives in place to deepen and strengthen the connections between schools and community organizations in the strategic ways promoted by the ExpandedED Schools approach. This development was also supported by a growing expectation and acceptance of school-community partnerships as an element of improvement strategies within the school districts. Biannual conversations held with leaders of New York City community organizations proved successful in changing views on the use of added learning time.

Stakeholders' efforts were facilitated by proximity to the school district, ongoing involvement with schools as program operators, and relative stability in district support for partnership, including through inclusion of partnership language in other district initiatives, such as a significant community schools initiative. Stakeholders also mentioned helping school and partner staff to advocate for and secure funding to support their own partnership work over the long term as pathways to diffusion. However, they noted that focusing the effort to spread partnership primarily on struggling schools or highlighting partnership as a turnaround effort may serve to limit some of the interest and subsequent dissemination efforts to a broader range of schools.

In contrast, a New Orleans funder commented that due to the decentralized nature of the school system, the region lacked "formalized structures" that could systemically support the development of school-community partnerships. Rather, previous partnerships between schools and community organizations had often developed solely as the result of personal or social connections between two or more members from different organizations; this different context affected the nature and the speed at which the ExpandedED Schools approach could be adopted and spread. An ExpandedED Schools staff member described a concerted effort to change how school and system staff discuss partnership possibilities in New Orleans; for example, with a specific focus on shifting the discussion from "afterschool to extended learning." Over the course of the demonstration, this shift began to take hold, with a local funder commenting, "Overall, I do think that probably the most salient success story is the schools didn't partner, [but] now they're open to partnering, and that's something.... It seems little, but in a community like this, I think it's pretty big."

2. Frame the approach to reflect existing core values and priorities.

Compatibility accelerates dissemination. One of the critical initial judgments that practitioners make about whether to adopt a new approach is the extent to which the new approach is perceived as being compatible with existing programs or plans for operation. In each city in the ExpandedED Schools national demonstration, leaders from schools and school systems, partner organizations, and intermediaries indicated that the school-community partnership approach was generally viewed as compatible with existing programs or initiatives.

At the same time, the ExpandedED Schools approach persuaded demonstration schools and partner organizations to approach their work differently. For example, a community partner from Baltimore noted that the ExpandedED School approach, while sharing the same "core values" as a previous after-school program, had nonetheless persuaded the partner organization to become more intentional and deliberate about working closely with principals to identify goals and to

develop and implement joint plans of action to achieve them. The ExpandED Schools' emphasis on shared ownership between the school and partner was a change of perspective for the organization. The leader stated:

We got emboldened to work with principals in a different way. We started being more deliberate in meeting with the principals, their teams, and our afterschool [staff] to say, 'What do you want to accomplish? How can we work together?'

Based on the experience with ExpandED Schools and success in engaging the principals in more strategic ways, staff from this community organization now ask any school principal a common set of questions, including: (1) What are you trying to accomplish; (2) What skills do you want to address; (3) What curriculum should we use; and (4) What type of professional development will staff need?

Similarly, a representative from the New Orleans charter system commented that while the balanced curriculum with enrichment-focused programming was already part of the system's "DNA," learning about new promising practices for expanding learning opportunities resulted from participation in the national demonstration, and the charter organization has applied this new information in supporting other schools. A leader of a New York City school affirmed that participating in the national demonstration had helped the school better organize its existing work with community organizations. She stated that the ExpandED Schools approach "enabled us to use those resources at different points during the day...we were able to bring more effective services in."

[ExpandED Schools] facilitated a meeting with the different community partners that was a really interesting and informative meeting about the ExpandED model, especially for those that really didn't know about the [model] and how we could all work together, how we could all lean on each other for different types of needs and expertise that each of the organizations could bring to the table.

- School Staff Member

3. Offer facilitation and resources to support adoption and spread.

The school system can play a crucial role in establishing and maintaining an overall climate that is supportive of school-community partnerships as a component of school reform efforts. However, much of the day-to-day work that actually supports the implementation of effective partnerships occurs within the walls of participating schools (i.e., under the purview of school leadership). The ExpandED Schools demonstration highlights the significance of giving staff of both the school and partner organization the training and tools needed to support the development of effective partnership. A leader of a community partner organization in the ExpandED Schools demonstration noted that early meetings with the principal to discuss the collaboration and its daily operation "made principals feel like they were a partner" and critical to the success of the partnership. Interviews with school, community, and national organization staff reinforced how significant these ongoing meetings were in maintaining buy-in and commitment for all stakeholders.

Resources and Supports Offered By ExpandED Schools

- Annual convenings
- Facilitated school-level meetings and technical assistance
- 6,000-Hour Learning Gap Video
- GradTracker data analysis
- School Readiness Tool for expanded learning
- District Readiness Tool for expanded learning

ExpandedED Schools provided resources to support the development and maintenance of effective partnerships. For example, a leader of one national organization noted that the work of ExpandedED Schools has “changed the language and understanding of what is possible in a school-community partnership.” Similarly, a representative of another organization noted that ExpandedED Schools has taken the lead in creating effective communication strategies and materials on the opportunity learning gap and how effective partnerships can close that gap. These concrete resources provided tools to promote spread both within schools and throughout school systems.

Interview respondents also said that the intermediary organizations in the ExpandedED Schools national demonstration were essential in helping school and partner organizations engage in and sustain productive conversations about implementing effective school-focused partnerships. A New York City school administrator noted that staff from ExpandedED Schools facilitated “focused conversations” between school and partner organization staff that helped them begin to build effective partnerships. As these partnerships matured over time, added the administrator, staff members developed the capacity to hold these conversations independently. A staff person from another New York City partner organization said that ExpandedED Schools provided trainings directed at helping organizations support schools in implementing a principal-led model of external partnerships. Similarly, a representative of the New Orleans charter school system noted that ExpandedED Schools had facilitated the “hard conversations” in which staff needed to engage as the organization incorporated partnership principles into its overall model for operation:

We had a partnership meeting that we’ve never done before. We got all the partners in the school to come and sit at the table and kind of talk about ways we could improve [the expanded day overall in our system], and how all partners could work together to make it happen, and how we could reach more kids.

Intentional Planning for Partnership in ExpandedED Schools Examined through the Diffusion Framework

The diffusion of any idea or practice in education depends, in part, on the school and system context; on the relationships between individuals within and across organizations; and on the characteristics of the practice itself. In the ExpandedED Schools national demonstration, several preconditions within the demonstration schools’ districts either allowed for or constrained greater spread of the partnership philosophy that is the foundation for the ExpandedED Schools approach. In Baltimore and New York City, for example, prior school-community partnership initiatives supported the launch of ExpandedED Schools. Having policies emphasizing the need for strategic partnerships between schools and community organizations for after-school programming, the two districts began promoting a community schools approach during the demonstration. In New Orleans, however, a decentralized school system and, as noted by one of the funders, a lack of formalized structures to support the development of school-community partnerships served as a barrier to more widespread adoption of the partnership model beyond one of the charter management organizations.

The characteristics of the approach also contribute to the likelihood that it will diffuse to a broader group of individuals or organizations. The compatibility of new approaches with existing policies or priorities and their relative advantage over existing practice both influence the diffusion process. In Baltimore, for instance, one community organization leader stated that the ExpandedED Schools approach was similar to what had been the organization’s model for working with schools. While adapting to the ExpandedED Schools model was not a major shift in practice, it had clear advantages over their existing model for contributing to the school, and the partner organizations “got emboldened to work with principals in a different way.” In New Orleans, the charter management organization overseeing a demonstration school saw the benefits of how strategic partnerships could benefit all the schools in that charter system.

Create Deliberate Communication Networks

Communication needs to be strategically managed both horizontally—within and across schools—and vertically—between systems and schools—to facilitate dissemination. There needs to be a communication mechanism to spread the messaging of the ExpandED Schools approach. Stakeholders would use this mechanism to share information on effective implementation strategies, anticipate barriers, and celebrate successes, in order to champion and further encourage dissemination. Instructions to adopt a new approach cannot just come as a mandate from a system, or as a program directive from a sponsoring organization or funder. Although an approach may be implemented for reasons of compliance (e.g., simply labeling any afterschool activities “ExpandED”), under such conditions it is less likely to be fully championed or embraced. Rather, creating a communication mechanism for sharing and developing buy-in can lead to more sustained adoption, and, ultimately, dissemination of a new set of practices. Based on experience, ExpandED Schools school and community partner staff advocated for identifying change agents at all levels of operation of a school-community partnership initiative to take ownership of and champion the partnership in order to encourage dissemination.

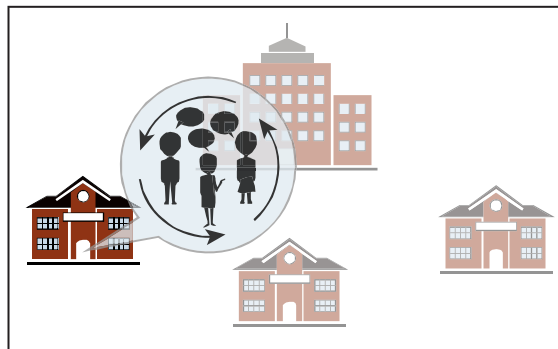
1. Engage decision-makers at the school and partner organization.

At the school level, interview respondents consistently emphasized the value of principal engagement for setting the overall tone of the implementation of new approaches, for opening the door to community partner involvement, and for shaping the partnership to best meet the needs of the school. Stakeholders also emphasized the need to involve teachers in supporting the work and noted that committed teachers can often maintain a higher level of commitment to partnership than the principal alone can; for example, in Baltimore a group of teachers supported the continuation of the ExpandED Schools approach in one school through multiple leadership changes. Their ongoing involvement supported continuation of the partnership across principals.

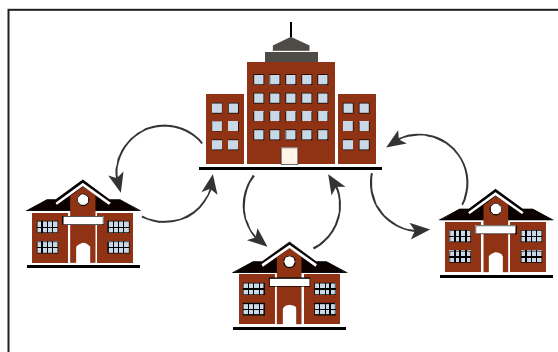
Building and maintaining principal buy-in was a major factor in spreading a strong school-community partnership in the ExpandED Schools demonstration. Securing the support of teachers, the extent of partner integration into the school, and opening the door for greater levels of parent involvement often began and ended with the principal. A school staff person from New York City underscored the major contribution of principals, stating that the model “is really dependent on the administration, and what’s different about ExpandED versus other after-school [programs] is that it really sits

Creating communication networks

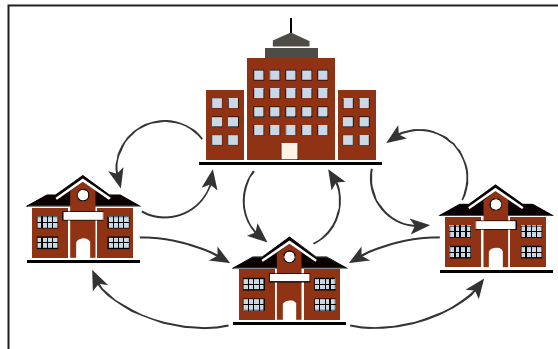
School and community organizations discuss and commit to the partnership



Change agents in the system champion partnership



Successes and challenges are shared throughout system



at the principal's desk." At the heart of this commitment is a willingness to work with external partners and a clear understanding of how these partnerships can help the school accomplish its achievement goals.

Although commitment from both principals and teachers is foundational, this general commitment needs to be supported by staff with explicit responsibility for ensuring that the planned school-community partnership activities occur. In ExpandedED Schools, each school's partnership was managed by a director who served as the main point of contact between the community organization and the school. As noted by one New York City principal, this liaison facilitated the "seamlessness" between the school and partner organization and was someone with whom teachers could consult if they wanted community partner staff to focus on a specific topic or skills with students.

True partnership takes a lot of work, having folks whose task it is to nurture that partnership is key.

– School principal

Discussions of factors that contributed to the development of principal commitment highlighted the ways in which both internal and external pressures can build buy-in and potential spread of the approach to more schools. For example, a Baltimore principal who was new to a demonstration school noted that when she arrived at the school, she was unfamiliar with the goals of the ExpandedED Schools partnership and the responsibilities of the partner organization. The director from the community partner communicated to the principal how the partnership could potentially help her meet the school's achievement goals. As the school had several leadership changes during the national demonstration, it was critical for the director to prove that he was a "valuable partner" in the school. Once he demonstrated his value to a principal by being visible throughout the school day and developing relationships with families, securing principal support became less challenging and he was able to work more closely with new principals to shape the program in ways that best aligned with school needs and learning goals.

2. Identify change agents and champions in systems.

System-level champions also provide critical support for dissemination. In the ExpandedED Schools national demonstration, the intermediary organization provided a sustained focus on implementation quality and professional development to both school and partner organization staff, grounded in ownership and accountability for the implementation and results of the partnership.

Interview respondents also stressed the significance of the school system in facilitating spread of school-community partnership initiatives. Several respondents noted that school systems should designate an office solely dedicated to supporting partnership. A representative of a national organization commented:

You have to have a district that's committed to it. They show commitment by having an office that thinks about this districtwide, and schools that want to take advantage of it have a place to go for technical assistance and any help they need in running it. There needs to be buy-in at different levels and a common understanding of what the goals are.

An intermediary representative suggested situating the system-level ownership for a school-community partnership initiative in a specific office such as the office of community engagement or as a key task of another district office:

There needs to be leadership in place that understands the strategy and the need. There has to be an understanding that this is an integrated mode; it's about partnerships. The district has to understand that this is an academic partnership that needs to cross over [into other offices]. Also, the school system needs to have a strategy for coaching principals and teachers in doing partnerships.

Principals highlighted the important role that central office messaging and demonstrated support can play in supporting the adoption of new approaches. For example, a Baltimore principal noted that district goals for improving student learning shaped how she initially approached the implementation of ExpandedED Schools: "We all knew what our goal was, and we all knew what we should be doing to get there." The district had instituted professional learning cycles that gave principals a "map" for school goals. She reported using this map to shape how she approached leveraging her ExpandedED Schools partnership, commenting: "You have to make sure that your partner understands that it's important that we work

together as a team, that we work in concert. It can't be that the things that we do during the school day are thrown to the wayside once [name of organization] takes over." As a result, she focused the partnership on helping the school achieve its literacy goals.

3. Share lessons learned about what works—and what doesn't work.

For the ExpandED Schools national demonstration, clear, open, and frequent communication about its approach, goals, successes, and challenges is at the heart of dissemination efforts. Sharing concrete information about how the ExpandED Schools approach works in day-to-day practice not only helped to support efforts to improve implementation and operation at both the school and system levels in the national demonstration, but also helped to build support and interest in expanding the reach of the approach.

Sharing lessons within schools and partner organizations. Sharing lessons learned, and a willingness to make changes based on these lessons, can strengthen school-community partnerships and implementation of new approaches rooted in these partnerships. For example, the leaders of both ExpandED Schools community partner organizations in Baltimore noted that they had changed the curriculum used during the after-school hours in response to concerns about alignment with school learning goals and student needs. One leader stated:

We had written our own curriculum, and [although] our curriculum was Common Core-directed, it still wasn't getting at what each individual school felt they needed. We started being more deliberate in meeting with the principals and their teams and our after-school persons to really say, 'What do you want to accomplish? How can we work together to even select the curriculum [so] that you will be comfortable? Or not comfortable with, but [our choice] will address the needs that you have and then do the professional development or whatever is required to get your staff and ours onboard so we can make it work.' I think as a practice that just is, to me, the winning combination.

Similarly, a director of a New York City partner discussed how essential it was to conduct ongoing discussions with school staff on what is working and not working in order to tailor the program to better meet school needs. The director explained, "I was getting to learn the ins and outs of the school day and systems in place and why we create certain curricula for certain areas and why we may opt out of using other curricula; what the benefits were for our students."

Sharing lessons across the system. Interviewees who participated in the national demonstration in all three cities pointed to the diffusion that occurred as a result of their communications with their peers. Staff from the intermediary organizations reported applying lessons learned about effective strategies to make decisions on partnership supports and policies across schools. A representative of the Baltimore intermediary organization highlighted having honest conversations about what works, and making changes when challenges occur. During the initial years of the demonstration, the intermediary organization received feedback on enrollment policies when serving all students in the school was not possible in an expanded day. The intermediary staff person stated: "We heard that whole school wasn't possible [to sustain] and shifted to the grade-level reading model. We heard that excluding siblings and pre-K students were barriers for older students to participate. As a result, we came up with ways to think of ways to flexibly address these concerns." Additionally, experiences with ExpandED Schools helped to shape how the Baltimore intermediary approached school-community partnerships in community schools in the district that were not part of the demonstration.

Respondents from all three cities also emphasized sharing experiences with non-participating schools and partner organizations in diffusion efforts. One ExpandED Schools staff member described this as the important role that "proof of concept" can play in encouraging other to adopt the school-community partner approach.

If the district isn't signaling that this kind of school design and integration of partners is important, then it creates barriers for a school to succeed.

- National Advocate

For example, the ExpandED Schools partnership approach helped a New York City community organization develop a “more accurate picture of the school and a more holistic picture of the students.” The organization has used lessons from its ExpandED Schools experiences to shape its work with other schools with which it partners. Through the use of “learning labs,” the organization reported improvements in how it manages key activities such as homework assistance, adding that staff are increasingly focused on tailoring academic supports to students based on their learning needs. Additionally, the organization provides specific support to students throughout all its partner schools in the areas of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and English. A leader of the organization attributed these changes to the close relationship with the ExpandED demonstration school, stating, “I think that part of the success here is the fact that program administrators sit alongside school administrators as partners, and being able to learn from them was instrumental for me as a director.”

In New Orleans, a representative from a charter management organization noted that the organization has started applying lessons from its experience in the ExpandED Schools national demonstration and is beginning to apply across its network of schools. He noted that the charter organization views the ExpandED Schools approach to partnership as a “strategy for engagement as opposed to an add-on.” He noted that the lessons learned are affecting funding decisions as the charter organization makes efforts to incorporate funding to support an expanded day for more schools, as well as STEM and arts staff dedicated to full integration of academic and enrichment opportunities across schools.

Deliberate Communication Networks Examined through the Diffusion Framework

The structures of the systems in which new approaches are launched can create policy and structural opportunities. Networks and communication channels give people and organizations the opportunity to learn about new approaches. Potential adopters’ perceptions of the characteristics of new approaches are influenced, in part, by the strength of these communication mechanisms. When potential adopters can learn about and observe a new practice being used successfully in an organization similar to their own, they are more likely to form a favorable impression of it. Awareness of ExpandED Schools was fostered by the natural interactions that occur between people within and across local organizations (schools, districts, and community partner organizations) and by ExpandED Schools’ approach to fostering intentional, goal-oriented conversation and collaboration between school and community partner staff.

The exchanges between adopters and non-adopters affirm the compatibility of the new approach in their shared context and the relative advantage over previous practices. The conversations reassure potential adopters that the new approach will be successful and practical within their organization’s unique context. A representative from one partner organization indicated that the demonstration school served as a “proof of concept,” leading other schools served by that partner to adopt some aspects of the new approach.

In addition, having knowledgeable people within a school who support and embed the partnership approach helps to ensure that their efforts will persist despite leadership changes. Both ExpandED Schools and the partner organizations that implemented the approaches fostered these connections and opportunities for learning, and, as a result, ExpandED Schools practices spread beyond the demonstration schools in all three cities.

Advocate for Supportive Policy Structures

1. Provide incentives within the accountability structure.

In the ExpandedED Schools demonstration, district policy and guidance played a major part in encouraging the spread of the approach. School system messages on the importance of the approach need to be actively reinforced with training and support in order for the new approach to gain traction and spread. For instance, a New York City community organization leader stressed the value of clear, explicit support for partnership throughout system leadership supports and accountability structures:

Both the superintendent and the people between the superintendent and the principals are the real linchpins in this. They are supervising the principals; they are rating officers for the principals; they are the professional development providers for the principals.

A New York City district leader also pointed out the value of principal accountability, as expressed through feedback to principals: as part of their review and assistance, local superintendents can look for evidence of principal support for partnerships and ask principals questions about their operation of partnerships. A Baltimore principal who advocated for more school autonomy from the district in order to craft a tailored strategy nonetheless ensured that the school-community partnership would remain a priority:

I think the district can support [us] in terms of just making sure that we adhere to the guidelines. Every school is different and there's no way that the district office will know the ins and outs and the needs in every single school community. So they entrust us with that work [with our school partner]. They can ask, 'What does your community want, what do they need, and how can you align your resources to meet those needs?'

2. Acknowledge and address systemic operational or policy barriers

The adoption of new approaches that rethink the use of time in the school day or the roles and responsibilities of school staff and community partners can be hindered by structural barriers that compromise any efforts to change the operation of a school or of a partner's programming. Spreading a new approach, therefore, requires anticipating and addressing systemic barriers that may prevent adoption, and identifying the resources needed to support the new approach.

A representative of a national organization noted, for example, "I think there are not enough incentives for principals to pursue these kinds of external partnerships, and sometimes not enough support in the form of human capital to actually get it done inside [school] buildings." This national representative emphasized that a system can create "enabling conditions" that can support the operation of such school-community practices as those that undergird the ExpandedED Schools approach. Identifying partnerships as a district strategy for improving student achievement can be seen as one of these conditions.

More concretely, he noted that a system needs to provide access to operational structures, including flexible funding, access to transportation, and staffing policies that encourage schools to adopt partnership-based principles. The head of a funding agency in Baltimore expressed a similar view of the potential role of school districts in facilitating principal buy-in, stating, "I do think there has to be a true orientation of the school system to partnership and a belief that partners are going to help achieve the goals of a school system." He added that a critical role for the system is to remove barriers to partnership. As two such barriers, for example, he identified challenges to data sharing and data access, as well as freeing up access to existing funds to support the work.

The importance of addressing collective bargaining agreements when planning for spread of strategic school-community partnerships was also a common theme in the ExpandedED Schools demonstration. Such labor agreements can affect whether and how teachers and community partners are able to operate and share time in an expanded or restructured school day. Representatives from a national organization discussed the need to work closely with unions if widespread diffusion of new approaches to the school day is the goal, noting that the union would have to be in agreement with any

changes affecting teacher workloads or schedules. A representative of the Baltimore intermediary noted that even after the organization engaged in talks with the union about implementing some aspects of the ExpandedED Schools approach, they were unable to aggressively pursue a restructured school day due to the district's teacher union agreements. Similarly, a New York Department of Education representative noted that interventions involving school-community partnerships need to be "very explicit" about ensuring that operational agreements do not supplant existing union agreements, noting that "at the end of the day this has to be additive."

3. Provide a vision and plan for sustainability.

Schools and organizations are unlikely to embrace a change initiative if they are unsure of the quality and impact of the initiative or if they doubt their ability to sustain it. Stable funding, however, encourages adoption, sustainability, and spread of an initiative at all levels, whether the funding relies on a dedicated new funding stream, or on a clear path to leveraging existing funds. In the ExpandedED Schools national demonstration, funding was a significant factor in either facilitating or impeding sustainability and dissemination efforts.

Funding conversations often revolve around the total amount of resources available to implement and sustain new programs and practices—and efforts to increase that funding to implement new programs. On a practical level, systems and schools can also think differently about how to better use the resources that already exist to support the partnership.

Consistent funding encourages diffusion. Developing a plan for shared and sustainable funding proved to be challenging for many ExpandedED Schools in the demonstration. A community leader in Baltimore commented that there was no "reliable stream of funding" for the expanded learning partnerships in the district. She noted that while the city government and local foundations provided funding for some schools, and the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program provided funding for other schools, these sources were limited. Although there was greater availability of funding for school-community partnerships that support programming in the after-school hours in New York City, a principal noted that to continue to support this programming:

We have to go find it. We've got to find grants. It's a year-to-year thing, and you don't know if you're going to be able to do it next year because the grant is going to run out.

Uncertainty over the ability to sustain programming eventually becomes a barrier to diffusion. One Baltimore principal noted that participation in the ExpandedED Schools demonstration had raised parent and student expectations of what schools could offer students; however, she did not expect to maintain the same level of enrichment programming without the demonstration's support. In a district offering school choice, she anticipated losing enrollment when parents find schools offering a wider range of learning opportunities. Inconsistency in sustaining programming has significant consequences, and it also serves as a cautionary tale to other schools and partners that are considering the approach. According to a community partner:

When you go from whole school to whole grade that has an impact. And to be totally candid, I think to some degree people may have lost faith in the system. When you go to a whole school model and then you go, 'No, we're going to whole grade' and these are the grades, they say, 'Well, what about the rest of them?'

Flexible funding and leveraged use of existing resources can promote sustainability. Several interview respondents valued having ongoing access to flexible funding. For example, a New York principal commented that the school has had challenges acquiring the "right funding" to support the vision for the school. Much of the money the school uses is directed to the after-school hours, she noted, but students often have other issues that need to be addressed when they arrive at school in the morning. She stated, "We don't have enough resources to target that morning entrance for those students who are coming from far away; who come in hungry; who didn't have access to a hot shower; or who didn't get to eat breakfast.... Having the right support at the right time is a big challenge."

A Baltimore community leader also noted that complex district procurement policies can often serve as an internal barrier to accessing funds available for school use. He stated:

I can't tell you how often I'm in conversations where people have money, or at least there's budgeted money, but the administrative barriers to spending it are so great that sometimes it's not worth it. For example, the family engagement dollars that schools get from Title I. I've talked to principals who have said, 'It's just too hard to spend it. What we need, what we have to go through to get it for the amount of money that it is, it's just not worth it.'

System leaders and initiative developers can help to create a vision and plan for how to access and efficiently braid available funding sources to support new approaches. A Baltimore funder noted, "It takes a visionary person to sort of think about shared resources, and how you best use all of the resources that are available to serve your kids in the most strategic way." Demonstration school participants appreciated how ExpandedED Schools had helped schools and partners look creatively at current funding and develop a budget for funding expanded day activities. One commented:

It's been beautifully done. I thank ExpandedED for this stuff. When you talk about braiding funding streams, that's hard. It's not just, 'Here is information on this funding.' It's what are you allowed to do, what are you not allowed to do, but also how do you even think about it sometimes.

Supportive Policy Structures Examined through the Diffusion Framework

The structures of the systems in which new approaches are launched can create policy and structural opportunities as well as constraints to diffusion. These policies can create the preconditions for the spread of the model. For example, many of New York City's current youth policies and initiatives rely on partnership with community organizations. Several interview respondents noted that the ExpandedED Schools partnership model gave school leaders and community organizations a road map for further building and sustaining these partnerships.

However, system policies and structures can also create barriers to diffusion. The decentralized New Orleans system limited potential adopters to the set of schools managed by a management organization. Funding structures are also a potential constraint on diffusion. If schools or community organizations perceive that new practices (e.g., a school-community partnership approach) cannot be easily tried and abandoned (trialability) or are too difficult to implement because of present or anticipated future funding constraints, schools may be less likely to adopt the approach. Interview respondents indicated that once schools start offering expanded day programming through partnership, parents and students come to expect it and are disappointed if the programming is not funded and maintained. Schools then have a difficult time returning to more traditional school day schedules.

Taking advantage of opportunities and working through barriers created by district policies and structures require working with districts and helping schools to understand how to access available funding and allocate it effectively. One interviewee from the New York City Department of Education, for example, suggested formalizing the expectation for school and community partnerships as part of the school leader evaluation system—and working with schools to address the barriers. Several stakeholders suggested that ExpandedED Schools had provided successful guidance and resources to help schools and partnerships understand creative ways to use available resources to fund the partnership for an expanded day.

Reflections on the Pace of Diffusion

As described in this report, at the conclusion of the five-year national demonstration of ExpandedED Schools, there is evidence of spread of the school-community expanded learning approaches within participating schools and partner organizations, as well as some evidence of diffusion throughout the school systems in which the demonstration occurred.

The ExpandedED Schools approach has been “successful in elevating the role of community educators and community partners as part of the solution, an integrated solution rather than the very bright line of bifurcation of responsibility which I think is the traditional way you think about the school day and afterschool.”

– National Funder

As ExpandedED Schools—or other developers of school-community partnership initiatives—look to future diffusion of new approaches, the findings from the evaluation of the national demonstration can accelerate the pace of diffusion if that is one of the ultimate goals of the effort. If, as was the case for the ExpandedED Schools national demonstration, the main goal was to test out an approach for building and sustaining effective school-community partnerships, explicit focus on diffusion may be something to consider once the tested approach is ready for spread.

Once diffusion is identified as an explicit goal for an initiative, organization leaders will likely want to focus on incorporating:

Explicit planning and communication for diffusion throughout all stages in the process. The focus of ExpandedED Schools was, by design, primarily on supporting implementation and adoption of the approach within the demonstration schools. Although some efforts were made to advocate for partnerships and expanded learning with broader systems, these efforts were less concentrated. More systemic planning for diffusion, including connecting the lessons learned at the school and community partner levels to the system level, would create clearer pathways for spreading the message about the approach, identify stakeholders to champion and communicate its value, and anticipate and avoid some of the barriers, including concerns about sustainability and policy structures, that slowed the progress of spread in the national demonstration. This section of the report describes the approaches taken to develop the school-community partnership of the ExpandedED Schools model, as well as the factors that supported and challenged the implementation of an effective collaborative partnership.

Thinking about where the field was from my vantage point, I think there has been a move towards extending learning time. That was probably more controversial five years ago. I think the question now is how. There is a lot of variation in how districts go about this work, but there seems to be a growing understanding that well-structured partnerships are worth considering.

– National Organization Leader

Local context at the forefront of decision-making. For the national demonstration, ExpandedED Schools was intentionally interested in working in diverse systems and contexts. Throughout the course of the demonstration, it became clear that the school-community partnership approach would be implemented differently based on the resources, prior history of partnership, and stability of the local school system. Anticipating these differences can influence the selection of places in which to initiate spread, the ways in which a design of the innovation is adapted and implemented, and where diffusion is most likely to rapidly occur.

Recommended Action Steps

A central finding of this evaluation of ExpandED Schools' national demonstration is that the success of the approach to Emerging from the findings of this evaluation of the factors that supported and hindered the diffusion of the Expand-ED Schools approach to school-community partnership are 10 action steps for stakeholders at both the system and the school level. These action steps are not intended to be sequential; rather, they are iterative throughout the lifecycle of a partnership. Some steps require all stakeholders in a partnership to take action; in other steps, certain stakeholders have primary responsibility. Combined, the experiences of the ExpandED Schools evaluation suggest that these action steps can strengthen the dynamic interactions between all who adopt and support approaches to improve education through partnership.

S School **D** School System **O** Intermediary Organization **C** Community-Based Organization **N** National Organization/Funder

Action Step	Stakeholders
Anticipate variation by context and prior partnership experience	N
Articulate the non-negotiable and flexible components of the approach	O N
Identify and communicate the commonalities of the new approach with existing programs and policies.	S D O C N
Get buy-in from change agents at the school and community partner.	S D O C N
Facilitate partnership meetings.	O
Create concrete tools to support and guide partnership development.	D O N
Share lessons about what works.	S D O C N
Identify system-level champions.	D O N
Support flexible use of leveraged funds.	D O N
Create policy incentives for adoption of the approach.	D O

Appendix A

The ExpandedED Schools Approach

The ExpandedED Schools national demonstration project was supported by The Wallace Foundation and operated in three cities for five school years (2011-12 through 2015-16). Participating cities included New York City, NY; Baltimore City, MD; and New Orleans, LA. In ExpandedED Schools, schools partner with community-based organizations to design a tailored plan for implementing high-quality academic and enrichment learning opportunities, guided by the core elements of the ExpandedED Schools approach, and a local intermediary organization provides support and technical assistance to both the school and community partners.

A total of 12 schools from the three participating cities participated in the national demonstration for at least one school year with eight of these schools participating for all five years of the initiative (Exhibit 1).

The ExpandedED Schools approach is framed by four core programmatic components which schools and partner organizations can flexibly implement as they respond to local conditions and priorities. The core components represent key principles thought to be critical for the implementation and sustainability of an expanded day that would serve as levers to transform the school learning environment. The national demonstration provided an opportunity for ExpandedED Schools and the broader expanded learning community to develop an in-depth understanding of the conditions that evidence suggests support—or hinder—the implementation of an expanded school day.

Exhibit 1
School participation in the ExpandedED Schools national demonstration, by city and year

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
New York City					
School A	→	→	→	→	→
School B	→	→	→	→	→
School C	→	→	→	→	→
School D	→	→	→	→	→
School E	→	→	→	→	→
Baltimore					
School A	→	→	→	→	→
School B	→	→	→	→	→
School C	→				
School D		→	→	→	→
New Orleans					
School A	→	→	→	→	→
School B	→	→	→		
School C	→	→			

Defining characteristics of the ExpandED Schools approach to expanding learning opportunities include: (1) the central role of a highly collaborative and coordinated school-community partnership and (2) the important role that the school principal plays in guiding the partnership and identifying ways to leverage it to improve student achievement and engagement. A hallmark of an ExpandED Schools partnership is joint planning to guide the strategic and intentional use of available resources to support high-quality academic and enrichment programming. As part of the partnership, school and community partner staff work closely to develop and implement a balanced approach to providing academic and enrichment activities that align with and complement traditional school day instruction and support positive youth development.

In collaboration with ExpandED Schools, the PSA evaluation team developed a rubric operationalizing the core elements and sub-elements of the model in the first year of the demonstration, which is summarized in Exhibit 2. This rubric guided analysis of implementation and adaptation by the evaluation team, and informed technical assistance to schools and community partner organizations by ExpandED Schools and local intermediaries.

Exhibit 2 **ExpandED Schools grounding practices**

Practice	Sub-elements
More time for a Balanced Curriculum	All students are engaged in expanded learning Students are exposed to rigorous, skill-based instruction as well as enrichment and other youth development activities
School-Community Partnership	School and community partner organization share responsibility for implementation of expanded learning Family engagement in learning is encouraged and evident
Engaging and Personalized Instruction	ExpandED Schools instruction addresses the individual needs of students ExpandED Schools instruction is data-driven
Integrated Funding Model	School and community partner organization budgets are coordinated Partnerships are strategically managed Both school and community partner organization support fundraising

Appendix B Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation was guided by three core questions, identified collaboratively by PSA, ExpandedED Schools, and The Wallace Foundation, about the ways in which demonstration schools, partnering organizations, and school systems and intermediary organizations made decisions that influenced the spread of the ExpandedED Schools model:

- Adaptations: What guides decisions about adaptations to the ExpandedED Schools model?
- Diffusion within demonstration systems: In what ways have the fundamental concepts of ExpandedED Schools been diffused within the demonstration systems and their communities?
- Implications for the field: How can lessons from the ExpandedED Schools demonstration be leveraged to inform the national conversation around scaling and expanded learning initiative? What lessons have emerged about defining an education model, the level of flexibility of a model's elements, and about the diffusion of these elements?

Evaluation team members conducted interviews with a range of individuals to collect data on factors influencing the dissemination of the ExpandedED Schools partnership approach.¹ PSA worked closely with staff from ExpandedED Schools to identify potential interview participants, especially those not directly involved with the national demonstration project; PSA staff, however, managed all aspects of interview scheduling and completion. Interview participants represented a range of levels of familiarity with ExpandedED Schools and the national demonstration. A total of 47 persons representing staff from national demonstration schools (including two former demonstration school leaders) and partner organizations; local intermediary and school district representatives; key staff from national afterschool and advocacy organizations (including staff from ExpandedED Schools); and local and national funders participated in an interview in 2016 (Exhibit B1).

Exhibit B1	
Number of Interviews by Participant Type	
Interview participant type	Number of completed interviews
Demonstration schools	12
Community partner organization	7
District/CMO	3
Local government	1
Local intermediary	3
Local funder	2
ExpandedED Schools	6
National Organization	
Provider	6
Advocacy	6
Funder	1
Total	47

¹ The evaluation team obtained research approval from Baltimore City Public Schools, New York Public Schools, and the charter management organization that operated the New Orleans demonstration school prior to conducting any interviews. Non-district/CMO interview participants provided verbal consent to participate in data collection efforts.

Evaluation team members used a semi-structured interview protocol to guide conversations with respondents. In line with the focus on diffusion, interview questions inquired about the extent to which the respondent had seen evidence of key aspects of the ExpandED Schools approach being adopted within local schools or school districts, community organizations, or at the national level; which factors facilitated or hindered the spread of the approach. Respondents were also asked to discuss factors which facilitated or limited the diffusion process and the conditions for success for the implementation and impact of a school-community partnership initiative such as ExpandED Schools.

The evaluation team conducted analyses of the interview data, looking for themes and patterns in discussion of factors supporting and hindering spread. The evaluation team examined findings through the core principles of dissemination theory to ground findings (see box).

Stages in the Diffusion Process

Preconditions

- Previous practice
- A problem that needs to be addressed
- Norms of the system

1. Awareness

The first stage of diffusion, during which potential adopters find out about the new policy or practice.

2. Persuasion

During this stage, individuals or organizations develop a favorable or unfavorable opinion of the new practice based on their perception of its characteristics:

- **Compatibility**—How compatible is the new practice with existing policies or practices?
- **Relative advantage**—How is the new practice better than existing practices?
- **Complexity**—Do individuals perceive the new practice as relatively easy to understand and implement?
- **Trialability**—How easy is the new practice to try on a limited basis and undo if it does not work as intended?
- **Observability**—Can the benefits of the new practice be observed in similar organizations?

3. Decision

Individuals or organizations decide to adopt the new practice.

4. Implementation

Individuals or organizations implement the new practice, during which they gather information that informs the final stage of the process.

5. Confirmation

Adopters decide to continue, adapt, or discontinue the policy based on whether the new practice met their needs, adequately addressing the problem that led to the initial adoption decision, and whether the new practice is sustainable.

Source: Rogers, E.M. (2003). *Diffusion of innovations, fifth edition*. New York: Free Press.

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