

Two Quality Improvement Tools

Introduction

My name is Cassandra O'Neill and I am the CEO of Leadership Alchemy LLC. I have worked with educational coaches for over 10 years to improve quality in early childhood and family support programs.

As part of the quality improvement efforts in states across the country, teachers and other early childhood and family support professionals are often asked to develop quality goals and quality action plans.

This packet contains two tools that are very effective in quality improvement efforts. The first one – The Quality Improvement Brainstorming Tool helps individuals work by themselves or with others to identify areas they want to change, and develop strategies to make change. This tool helps people develop ideas that go beyond the first idea or two. This is helpful because the first ideas have often been tried already.

For example, if you want to help a program increase the amount of time that staff are reading to children, you probably have already tried sending staff to training and buying books. By using this tool you can come up with some new ideas about why those earlier efforts might not have been successful, and brainstorm new approaches that haven't been tried before.

The second tool, the Plan Do Reflect Tool, helps people make a plan to try something new. Research shows that when people have a plan for trying something new, they are more likely to try it, and are also more likely to be successful. Learning new skills are often required to reach quality goals, and this worksheet can be used on its own, or in combination with the Quality Improvement Brainstorming Tool.

Tool # 1: The Quality Improvement Brainstorming Tool

Part 1: Getting Ready

To use the tool, you need to start with something you want to plan. The first two questions on the tool are – What do you want to brainstorm about? What do you want to see?

Hot Tip --Some ideas about ways to identify things to brainstorm about:

- Quality Assessment tools like the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) and the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) include ratings on many different quality measures. Any of the areas that are rated could be used as a broad goal in this tool;
- Strategic planning can result in goals that are set for an organization or group;
- When people interview each other using Appreciative Questions they end up with wishes, these wishes can contain goals you want to achieve;

- Other Assessment Data- There are many assessment instruments that produce reports with recommendations. Algorhythm's Impact Capacity Assessment Tool (ICAT) is an organizational capacity assessment tool, you can find out more about it at <https://algorhythm.io>; and
- During evaluation data collection, focus groups, surveys and interviews often include questions about what people want to see changed or see happen.

Part 2: Using the Quality Improvement Brainstorming Tool

By asking people the series of questions in this tool in the sequence presented – that new ideas emerged. The first ideas aren't often the best. Engaging in a process that requires deeper thinking and generates new ideas, can be simple with this brainstorming and action planning tool.

Once you've identified areas you want to brainstorm, you work through the prompt questions.

- What are 3 possible causes of what is happening now (the condition you want to change)?
- What strengths can you build on to create the change you want to see (both your personal strengths and the strengths of the organization)?
- What are possible action steps/strategies that could be put in place to create the change you want? Please think of 10-15 ideas.
- What challenges do you expect in trying out new ideas?
- What would help you make the changes you want to see?

Then Go Back! Review, add, brainstorm more. When you can't think of anything else pick a few ideas or action steps that you want to try or experiment with.

There are two versions of this tool, a narrative and a graphic. Try both and see which one works best for you.

Tool # 2 Plan Do Reflect

Research shows that when people have a plan to try something new, they are more likely to do it, and are more likely to be successful. To help people apply something in a quality improvement plan, or to learn a new skill from professional development, this simple tool helps people identify how and when to try something new, and then provides a structure for reflection on how it went. This leads to a new cycle of planning, doing, and reflecting.

The Quality Improvement Brainstorming Tool

Name of person brainstorming:

Date:

What do you want to brainstorm about?

Questions to think explore:

1. What result do you want to see? What would you like to see? (Broad Goal)

2. What are 3 possible causes of what is happening now (the condition you want to change)?
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3. What strengths can you build on to create the change you want to see (both your personal strengths and the strengths of the organization)?

4. What are possible action steps/strategies that could be put in place to create the change you want? Please think of 10-15 ideas.
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5. What challenges do you expect in trying out new ideas?

6. What would help you make the changes you want to see?

After thinking about the challenges do you want to add or take out any of the possible action steps/strategies you listed in # 4?

7.

After completing steps 1-6 – go back and add any new ideas to # 4 – the action steps. Do these build on strengths? Do they get at all the reason why you might not be seeing the result you want? Do they lead to the change you want?

Brainstorm some more – then when you can't think of anything else pick a few you want to try, and answer the question in step 8.

8. When the changes are made, when the goal is achieved, what do you see? What is happening?

The Quality Improvement Brainstorming Tool Graphic Version

Name of person brainstorming:

Date:

What do you want to brainstorm about?

1.

2.

4.

3.

5.

6.

7. After completing steps 1-6 – go back and add any new ideas to # 4 – the action steps. Do these build on strengths? Do they get at all the reason why you might not be seeing the result you want? Do they lead to the change you want?

Brainstorm some more – then when you can't think of anything else pick a few you want to try, and answer the question in step 8.

8. What will the change look like when it's made? What will you see?

5. What will support you in trying this new thing?

6. What do you want to pay attention to in yourself?

Step 2 Do -- Try the new thing.

Step 3 Reflect – After you tried the new thing – reflect on how it went.

1. What happened?

2. How did what happened compare to how you thought it would, what went as expected, what didn't?

3. What did you learn when you tried this new thing?

4. What would support you in trying again or trying a different new idea or strategies?

5. What will you try next? (proceed to step 1)