

Continuous Improvement Continuums

Self-Assessment Activity

Purpose Assessing on the *Continuous Improvement Continuums* will help staffs see where their systems are right now with respect to continuous improvement, and ultimately show that they are making progress over time. The discussion that leads to consensus is the most valuable piece of this activity. In addition to helping the entire staff see where the *school or district* is, the discussion begins to write the sections of the *Continuous Improvement Portfolio* for them.

Target Audience School or district staff

Time Three hours for the first assessment; 90 minutes for subsequent assessments.

Materials One set of the school or district *Continuous Improvement Continuums* (CICs), enlarged to poster size, a copy of the CICs for staff members, chart pad paper, markers, masking tape or tacks to hang the large *Continuums*, colored dots, 3x5 post-its, *The Continuous Improvement Portfolio PowerPoint* presentation, and computer for notetaking—or use the *SchoolCity Portfolio* Continuum Section to record your results as you go.



Process Protocol Hang the enlarged posters of the *Continuous Improvement Continuums* around the room. Read about where the *Continuous Improvement Continuums* came from, that they represent the theoretical flow of continuous improvement, going from reactive (1) to proactive (5). Have a person available to record the highlights of the conversation in the comment section of the *SchoolCity Portfolio*.

1. Establish ground rules for the assessment. We want to make sure everyone understands that the conversation is safe and confidential. Also clarify why it is important to do this activity.

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2. Introduce the first section of the *Continuums—Information and Analysis*. Ask staff members to read the *Information and Analysis Continuous Improvement Continuum* and see if they can recognize where the *school or district* is right now, with respect to *Approach, Implementation, and Outcome*. Start with a one and move to a five. Keep the group moving and try to avoid rewording the descriptions of the continuums.



3. Direct staff to walk over to the *Information and Analysis Continuum* on the wall and place a colorful dot or flag where they believe the school/district is with respect to *Approach, Implementation, and Outcome*. We call this “dotocracy.”
4. After everyone has placed her or his dot, review what you see. Focusing on *Approach*, ask for discussion of why staff thought the school/district was a 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5. Record the highlights of the discussion.
5. After the discussion, if one number is becoming clearly favored, ask if there is anyone who could not live with this number as a baseline assessment of this school’s or district’s *Approach to Information and Analysis*. If no one opposes, write that number on a post-it and place it on the large continuum to represent the consensus decision of the group. If there is not a number that is clearly favored after the first discussion, continue the discussion. You can assist if there is a stalemate by systematically asking what the organization has for *Information and Analysis*, and walking through each number in *Approach*, clarifying what the organization would have to have to be a specific number. Ask again for a show of hands.
6. Continue with *Implementation and Outcome*.

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7. When consensus on the three sections is complete, ask for the “Next Steps.” *What do we need to do to move up? Or to become the next solid number?*
8. Continue with the next six *Continuums*. After *Information and Analysis*, you can usually introduce two *Continuums* at a time. (If you are familiar with the *Continuums*, you could read and dot two or three at the same time. You will need to discuss each one separately to list “Next Steps.”)
9. As staff is reading the next *Continuum*, use the time to type highlights of the discussion on the just completed *Continuum*. You will be able to leave with a complete report that summarizes the assessment results that day.
10. Add digital pictures of the assessment charts to the report to watch the staff thinking come together over time.

Comments to the Facilitator

We want the *Continuous Improvement Continuums* to add a sense of urgency for improvement. To that end, do not let staff members average their scores or rate themselves too high. Make sure they think about, and write, next steps.

Averaging the scores does not inspire change—especially on the first assessment. If the discussion hangs between two numbers, go to the lower number, and write solid *Next Steps* to become the next number.

Make sure everyone knows the emphasis is on *consensus* and not just a vote. We want everyone to win!

Periodic (regular) assessment sessions will help staffs see that they are making progress. We recommend at least once a year.

