

# Effective Strategies for De-Implementation in Education

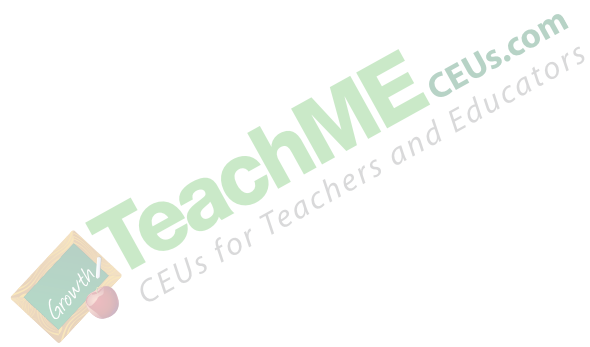


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# Introduction

This course will examine the multifaceted landscape of de-implementation within the school setting. De-implementation, a concept that has gained increasing recognition in recent years, holds profound significance for educators and educational institutions alike. Section 1 will lay the foundation by delving into the fundamental concept of de-implementation and unraveling its vital role within the educational landscape. By understanding the "what" and "why" of de-implementation, participants will gain insights into why it is essential for educators to grasp and apply these principles. Moving forward, Section 2 will explore the De-Implementation Cycle, a structured framework designed to guide educators in the process of effectively removing ineffective practices from their educational settings. This section will equip participants with practical strategies and tools to navigate the complexities of de-implementation, ensuring that teams can successfully implement these practices within their educational context. Section 3 will confront the various challenges and barriers that educators may encounter during the de-implementation process. By acknowledging and understanding these obstacles, teams will be better prepared to navigate them and make informed decisions to drive positive change within their educational practices. By the conclusion of this course, participants will not only possess a profound understanding of de-implementation but also be equipped with a diverse range of strategies and insights to navigate this vital aspect of education effectively.

## Section 1: What is De-Implementation and Why is it Important in Education?

### Definition of De-Implementation

De-implementation in an educational setting refers to the process of discontinuing or scaling back existing practices or interventions that are not evidence-based or

are not yielding the intended impact (Evidence for Learning, 2022). It is not an all-or-nothing approach, as there may be instances where a gradual reduction or modification of practices is more appropriate than complete discontinuation. Similar to implementation, de-implementation should be viewed as an ongoing process of change rather than a one-time event (Evidence for Learning).

## Importance in Education

A key principle of effective implementation is to "do fewer things, better," necessitating regular evaluation and de-implementation of approaches that are not producing the desired outcomes (Evidence for Learning, 2022). Through the process of discontinuing ineffective practices, educational institutions can reallocate valuable resources like time, physical assets, personnel, effort, or funds. These newly accessible resources can then be used for more effective strategies, leading to enhanced student achievements in the end (Evidence for Learning).

De-implementation research, which originated in the medical field, has expanded to the field of school psychology and educational settings, where researchers examine practices that waste resources or may be harmful to students (DeWitt, 2022a). Thus, to put it simply, in an educational context, de-implementation is the discontinuation of interventions that should no longer be provided because it does not work (DeWitt). But what exactly constitutes a "low-value practice" and which interventions should no longer be provided? According to Farmer et al. (2021), low-value practices are characterized by several factors:

1. They have not been proven to be effective and impactful.
2. They are found to be less effective or impactful compared to other available practices.
3. They may cause harm.
4. They may no longer be necessary. (as cited in DeWitt)

## ***Closer Look at “Low-Value Practices”***

According to DeWitt (2022b), de-implementation should be “seen as a way to build sustainability within schools.” McKay et al. (2018) zoom in on Farmer et al.’s (2021) characterizations of low-value practices:

- **When interventions lack effectiveness or are harmful:** Educators should pay attention to diminishing data, such as an uptick in unfavorable indicators like the rising count of students sent to the main office or increased suspension rates, as well as a decrease in student and/or staff involvement. These signs collectively indicate reduced effectiveness or a lack of adherence to the desired practices (DeWitt, 2022b).
- **When more effective or efficient interventions become available:** In this context, educators must exercise caution to ensure that any new teaching method they adopt proves to be an improvement over their current practices and that they are not simply following a trend (DeWitt).
- **When the health or social issue of concern dissipates:** This research is from the medical field, but within the realm of education, we can rephrase it as follows: When a particular educational need has been adequately addressed (DeWitt). For example, a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) is designed to provide focused assistance to students facing challenges. However, there comes a point when the interventions prove effective (in some cases), and the student no longer requires this specialized support (DeWitt).

To abandon low-value practices, it is essential to engage in important conversations where teachers and leaders establish a shared understanding of terms such as “effective” and “impactful” (DeWitt, 2022b). For instance, if a principal requires teachers to submit their lesson plan books every three weeks for compliance purposes, but rarely has the time to review them all, it may be necessary to reevaluate the requirement and consider its elimination (DeWitt). By

critically examining and addressing low-value practices, educators can prioritize interventions that have demonstrated effectiveness and maximize the impact on student learning and well-being (DeWitt, 2022). This process involves ongoing dialogue and a commitment to identifying and letting go of practices that no longer align with the goal of providing the best educational experiences for students.

## Types of De-Implementation

In the past, researchers discussed four types of de-implementation that necessitate specific responses: complete reversal (discontinuation), partial reduction, substitution with related replacement, substitution with unrelated replacement (Wang et al., 2018). However, DeWitt (2022b) consolidated these categories into two: Partial reduction and replacement action. While these types are not rigid categories, and the overall de-implementation process remains consistent, understanding these variations can assist in tailoring the de-implementation approach.

### 1. *Partial Reversal*

Partial reversal comes into play when a practice or intervention demonstrates effectiveness in certain settings, sub-groups, or contexts, but not universally (DeWitt, 2022b). In this scenario, the de-implementation response involves scaling down or reducing the application of the practice. By acknowledging its limited effectiveness, the focus shifts towards minimizing the use of the practice in settings or for sub-groups where it does not yield the desired outcomes (Wang et al., 2018).

#### Partial Reversal Examples

**Homework.** Due to the unproven benefits of homework, educators are attempting to de-implement it in a variety of ways. The partial reversal of homework is an

educational practice where schools and educators are reconsidering the amount and nature of homework assignments given to students. This shift reflects concerns about the potential negative impacts of excessive homework on students' well-being, the need for a more balanced approach to learning, and the recognition that not all homework practices are equally effective (Levy, 2019). Many educators are choosing to de-implement homework by partially reducing the amount of homework they give, or replacing homework with nightly reading, opportunities to engage in passion projects, or flipped classroom approaches (DeWitt, 2022).

Accumulating research suggests that excessive homework may not always lead to improved academic outcomes and can, in some cases, negatively affect student well-being, particularly in terms of stress and sleep deprivation (Lathan, 2023). Education organizations, such as the National Education Association (NEA) and the National Parent Teacher Association (PTA), have provided guidelines and recommendations regarding appropriate homework levels and practices, such as no more than 10-minutes of homework per grade level (Levy, 2019). Some schools and districts have implemented homework-free policies, particularly at the elementary level, with the aim of promoting more balanced family and school life.

The partial de-implementation of homework can lead to reduced stress levels among students, allowing them to focus on a healthier balance between academic work and other aspects of their lives (Levy, 2019). Alternative approaches to homework, such as project-based learning and in-class practice, may lead to increased student engagement and a deeper understanding of the material (Lathan, 2023). De-emphasizing homework can help address equity issues, as students with varying levels of home support or access to resources may not be disadvantaged by homework assignments (Lathan). Teachers may focus more on the quality and relevance of assignments rather than the quantity, ensuring that homework aligns with learning objectives.



**Standardized Testing.** Another educational practice that has been partially de-implemented is standardized testing for high-stakes accountability purposes. Standardized testing has been a long-standing practice in education, used to assess student performance and hold schools and educators accountable for their outcomes (American University, 2020). However, in recent years, there has been a partial de-implementation of the practice, particularly in the context of high-stakes accountability. Standardized testing for high-stakes accountability gained prominence as a means of assessing school and teacher effectiveness. Under this practice, test scores often played a central role in decisions about school funding, teacher evaluations, and school rankings (American University).

Over time, standardized testing faced criticism for its overemphasis on test preparation, narrowing of the curriculum, and the potential for adverse consequences, such as underscoring racial and socioeconomic inequities (Jimenez & Modaffari, 2021). In response to these concerns, some states and school districts have implemented policies that reduce the weight of standardized test scores in high-stakes accountability systems. Some states have even allowed parents to opt their children out of standardized testing (Jimenez & Modaffari). In some cases, alternative forms of assessment, such as performance-based assessments, portfolios, and teacher evaluations, have been explored as ways to provide a more holistic view of student and school performance.

The partial de-implementation of standardized testing for high-stakes accountability purposes has led to reduced negative consequences for schools and educators based solely on test scores (Jimenez & Modaffari, 2021). Schools and educators have been able to shift their focus back to a more comprehensive education that includes a broader range of skills and knowledge beyond what is tested on standardized exams (Jimenez & Modaffari). Some states and districts have gained more flexibility in determining how to assess student and school performance, allowing for a more context-sensitive approach (Jimenez & Modaffari).

## **2. Replacement Action**

Replacement action is meant to combine Wang et al.'s other three categories. DeWitt (2022b) explains that the reason for this is because “regardless of what we discontinue, we will replace that time with something else—likely the opportunity to go deeper with another practice that is more worthwhile.” As such, discontinuation with no replacement does not really occur in education; whether the action is related or unrelated, there is always some type of replacement action. This type of de-implementation is applicable when a practice or intervention is found to be ineffective across all settings. In such cases, the recommended approach is to discontinue the practice entirely, and find a replacement that has demonstrated effectiveness. Recognizing that it is not working anywhere, the emphasis is on the complete cessation of the ineffective approach and encourages the adoption of the new approach to improve outcomes (Wang et al., 2018).

### **Replacement Action Examples**

**D.A.R.E.** Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.), designed to reduce drug use, gang involvement, and violence among young people, was widely used in schools during the 1980s and 1990s. D.A.R.E. workshops were delivered by local police officers that discussed drugs and dangerous activities that kids might encounter, and how to say no. McKay et al. (2018) explains, “When evidence of effectiveness became part of the criteria for obtaining federal funding, the program was revised in 2003, but failed to demonstrate effectiveness.” Ultimately, D.A.R.E. was eliminated.

When D.A.R.E. lost funding it was replaced with Keepin’ it REAL (KiR), in which several controlled studies “have shown a reduction in student drug use compared to peers who did not participate” (Berry, 2022). Further, Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) curriculum has become widely adopted among districts, and such programs also focus on making positive choices.

**Exclusionary Practices.** In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the need for an alternative to exclusionary discipline practices in schools. Exclusionary discipline practices, which encompass office discipline referrals, suspensions, and expulsions, have long been employed as a means to address student misbehavior and maintain a safe school environment; however, research and evidence have demonstrated that these practices are not effectively improving student behavior or enhancing school safety (Nese et al., 2020).

One of the primary concerns with exclusionary discipline practices is their lack of positive impact on student behavior (Nese et al., 2020). Despite their intended purpose, studies have consistently shown that removing students from the educational setting through suspensions or expulsions does not lead to lasting changes in behavior or contribute to the development of effective problem-solving skills (Nese et al.). Instead, these practices often result in a temporary removal of the student from the learning environment, without addressing the underlying causes of their behavior or providing them with the necessary support to make positive changes (Nese et al.).

Furthermore, a significant concern is the disproportionate use of exclusionary discipline practices in response to certain student populations. Research has indicated that Black students, males, and students with disabilities are more likely to be subjected to these disciplinary measures compared to their peers (Nese et al., 2020). This disparity raises serious equity issues within the education system and underscores the need to reevaluate and de-implement exclusionary practices that perpetuate systemic biases and contribute to educational inequities (Nese et al.).

As educators and school leaders recognize the limitations and negative consequences of exclusionary discipline practices, there is a growing movement to seek alternative strategies that promote positive behavior, address the root causes of student misbehavior, and create inclusive and supportive learning environments (Nese et al., 2020). This shift towards de-implementation is driven

by the understanding that punitive measures alone are ineffective and can perpetuate cycles of disengagement, academic underachievement, and disproportionality (Nese et al.).

By de-implementing exclusionary discipline practices, schools can explore and implement alternative approaches such as restorative justice, positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS), social-emotional learning (SEL), and comprehensive behavior management systems. These strategies prioritize prevention, intervention, and support, aiming to foster a positive school climate, improve student behavior, and ensure equitable treatment for all students (Nese et al., 2020). Through these efforts, educators can create a more inclusive, supportive, and transformative educational experience that promotes positive student outcomes and long-term success.

**Discrepancy Model.** The Discrepancy Model, historically used for identifying students with disabilities and determining their eligibility for special education services, has undergone significant de-implementation in many educational systems. This model was based on the idea that a significant discrepancy between a student's intellectual ability and the individual's actual academic performance was an indicator of a learning disability (Horowitz, n.d.). However, this model faced criticism for its limitations and potential to delay early intervention. When using the discrepancy model, educators examine whether there is a significant "discrepancy" or difference between a student's intellectual ability and actual school performance (Horowitz). This difference suggests that something, like a learning disability, might be causing the student to struggle with learning more than expected.

Over time, research and educational experts began to question the validity and effectiveness of the Discrepancy Model. Critics argued that it often led to delayed identification and intervention, as students had to show a significant academic failure before receiving support. The shift toward Response to Intervention (RTI) and Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) models began to gain prominence.

These models emphasized early intervention and provided a tiered approach to addressing learning difficulties, with more targeted supports for students in need (Mahmoud, 2019). The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was reauthorized in 2004, and it included provisions encouraging schools to use a "Response to Scientific, Research-Based Intervention" (RTI) process to identify students with specific learning disabilities. This change acknowledged the limitations of the Discrepancy Model. Now, some districts will still use the Discrepancy Model for additional evidence, but not as the basis for referral.

The de-implementation of the Discrepancy Model, along with the implementation of RTI and MTSS, has resulted in earlier identification and intervention for students with learning difficulties. RTI and MTSS models enable schools to provide support as soon as signs of academic struggles appear, reducing the wait time for special education services (North Dakota Department of Public Instruction [NDDPI], 2018). The shift away from the Discrepancy Model has allowed for more individualized and evidence-based support for students with diverse learning needs. Schools can tailor interventions to a student's specific challenges and strengths. RTI and MTSS models emphasize data collection and analysis to inform instructional decisions, promoting a more systematic and data-driven approach to addressing learning difficulties (NDDPI). The partial de-implementation has also led to a reduction in the overrepresentation of minority students in special education, as it allows for a more holistic assessment of a student's needs.

## **Formal and Informal De-Implementation**

"A formal de-implementation process is introduced for significant school change to make sure that decisions to reduce or replace are well thought out" (DeWitt, 2022a). Formal de-implementation typically requires a team of stakeholders, impacts most of the school, requires data collection "from a variety of sources," and can take a longer period of time to see the results (DeWitt). Examples of

formal de-implementation include adopting new curriculum, changing disciplinary procedures, or changing how teachers and staff are evaluated.

Informal de-implementation is typically done on a smaller scale and does not require a formal process to enact. Informal de-implementation can be done independently or within a teaching team, only impacts the individual or the team, can be done immediately, and can have immediate results (DeWitt, 2022a). Examples of informal de-implementation include changing teaching methods from lectures to more interactive strategies, having fewer after-school meetings, or assigning less homework.

Understanding the types of de-implementation can help educators tailor their strategies and responses according to the specific circumstances they encounter. This course will delve deeper into de-implementation and explore effective strategies for implementing it in educational settings. By recognizing the need for de-implementation and understanding the various approaches, educators can work smarter, not harder, by coupling implementation efforts with targeted de-implementation to ensure the allocation of resources toward practices that have the greatest impact on student learning and achievement.

## **Section 1 Key Terms**

**De-Implementation** - The process of discontinuing or scaling back existing practices or interventions that are not evidence-based or are not yielding the intended impact.

**Discrepancy Model** - A traditional method for identifying students with disabilities based on a significant discrepancy between their intellectual ability and academic performance.

**Evidence-Based Practices** - Educational strategies, interventions, or policies that are supported by research and have been shown to be effective in improving student outcomes.

Exclusionary Discipline Practices - Discipline methods that involve the removal of students from the educational setting, such as suspensions, expulsions, or office discipline referrals.

Low-Value Practices - Practices that have not been proven to be effective, are less effective than other available practices, may cause harm, or are no longer necessary.

Resource Reallocation - The process of redirecting time, personnel, physical assets, effort, or funds from low-value or ineffective practices to more effective strategies in education.

## Section 1 Reflection Questions

1. Reflect on a practice or policy in your school or district that you believe could benefit from de-implementation. Why? What steps would you take to initiate a conversation about this change?
2. What are some examples of low-value practices in education that might warrant de-implementation? How can we identify them?
3. How do you define "effective" and "impactful" practices in your educational context, and why is it crucial to have a shared understanding of these terms?
4. Can you think of any instances in your teaching experience where you have partially de-implemented a practice? What were the reasons behind this decision, and what were the outcomes?

## Section 1 Activities

1. **Explore Informal De-Implementation:** Identify an aspect of your teaching that you believe could benefit from an informal de-implementation

approach. Implement a small-scale change independently or within your teaching team. Document the process and outcomes.

2. **Identify Low-Value Practices:** Conduct a thorough review of your teaching practices, curriculum, or school policies. Identify any practices that you suspect may be low-value or ineffective based on the criteria discussed in this section. Keep a journal of your observations.
3. **Engage in Data Analysis:** Collect and analyze data related to the effectiveness of your teaching practices. This could include student performance data, classroom observations, or survey feedback. Use the results to inform adjustments to your teaching methods.

## Section 2: The De-Implementation Cycle

It is crucial to approach de-implementation with thoughtful consideration and support for teachers who may have been utilizing certain practices for an extended period. Simply stating "we're not doing that anymore" does not account for the change process that teachers need to undergo when letting go of familiar practices (Evidence for Learning, 2022). It is essential to provide support and ensure that teachers feel valued and their professional identity is not undermined during the de-implementation process. Teaching and learning are dynamic fields that evolve with new evidence and research. Therefore, de-implementation should be viewed as a normal part of the school improvement process, adapting to embrace more effective approaches as knowledge and understanding progress (Evidence for Learning).

To effectively implement de-implementation, it is vital to consider managing change and providing professional development opportunities for teachers. Supporting staff through the change process, helping them understand the rationale behind de-implementation, and offering resources and training are critical elements of successful de-implementation efforts (Evidence for Learning,



2022). By recognizing the need for change and creating a supportive environment, educational institutions can foster a culture of continuous improvement, adapt to emerging evidence, and prioritize teaching and learning effectively.

## The Cycle

In the context of education, the de-implementation process unfolds through various stages, ultimately leading to the widespread removal of an ineffective intervention from practice (McKay et al., 2018). Several frameworks exist to guide educators through this journey, drawing from both clinical and policy implementation expertise. Notably, Evidence for Learning (2022) developed a comprehensive framework, adapted from de-implementation research in other fields and an “understanding of how change occurs in a school as based on the evidence on effective implementation,” that serves as a valuable tool for structuring the de-implementation process in schools. The cycle of de-implementation, as defined by Evidence for Learning, includes four stages: 1) Explore, 2) Prepare, 3) Deliver, 4) Sustain.

### **Explore**

The "Explore" step in the de-implementation process involves thoroughly defining the problem and finding a suitable way to proceed. In essence, through investigation, data collection and reflection, this phase establishes the why (determined through data) and how (done through planning) of the process (Evidence for Learning, 2022).

**Use Data to Identify Priorities:** This phase begins with an in-depth investigation to determine which specific approach, program, or practice is ready for de-implementation. Such insights often emerge from ongoing monitoring and evaluation efforts within the school to assess their impact on students (Evidence for Learning, 2022). Key moments for exploration might coincide with school

review processes or the start of a new annual planning cycle. During this step, it's crucial to gather and interpret evidence to identify priorities accurately. Relying on evidence ensures that the right practices are selected for de-implementation, with a strong and convincing case to help others understand why these choices have been made (Evidence for Learning).

**Predict Barriers and Facilitators:** To make informed decisions during the "Explore" step, it's essential to consider the unique context of your school and identify potential barriers and facilitators (Evidence for Learning, 2022). Understanding factors that may hinder or assist in the de-implementation process is crucial. For example, historical significance or reliance on outdated resources can present challenges. To guide this exploration, educators can reflect on various questions, such as the extent to which the approach is currently embedded, how long to continue a practice before de-implementation, and whether reliable evidence supports this decision. This reflection is key to navigating the de-implementation process effectively (Evidence for Learning).

### **Prepare**

In the "Prepare" step of the de-implementation process, the focus shifts toward getting the school and its staff ready for the changes ahead; this phase requires careful planning and can be quite intensive (Evidence for Learning, 2022). During this phase, the team will provide the essential context and explanation for all the important members of the school community, enabling them to gain a comprehensive understanding of the process and actively participate in it.

**Develop a Clear Plan:** The first crucial aspect is creating a well-defined de-implementation plan. This plan should outline the de-implementation process and its intended goals, identify necessary activities, assess the school's and staff's readiness for de-implementation, and establish methods for monitoring and evaluating the plan's progress (Evidence for Learning). Essentially, it provides a roadmap for guiding the de-implementation process effectively.

Evidence for Learning (2022) provides a graphic organizer to complete during the “Prepare” step, which also serves as output to guide the rest of the process. This map is broken up into five components:

1. **Problem:** Explains what needs to change, or what is being de-implemented.
  - A commonly employed practice has been assessed and found to have little or no significant effect on student outcomes, and no further benefit to the school.
2. **De-implementation Description:** Outlines the main components of the plan.
  - Each school’s plan will vary to an extent but all should include:
    - a. *Ensuring stakeholders understand and accept the need for de-implementation.* This includes clear communication explaining reasons (evidence and research) for de-implementation.
    - b. *Staff eliminates the practice.* Professional learning (PL) should be designed and delivered at this point to support the program or process de-implementation, as well as for introducing any replacements.
    - c. *Modify any policies that have contributed to the implementation and continuation of the instructional practice.*
    - d. *Implement monitoring mechanisms to assess the success of de-implementing the instructional practice* (Evidence for Learning).
3. **De-implementation Activities:** Lists the activities that participants need to engage in for the de-implementation process to happen. For example, completing a de-implementation checklist, facilitating an all-staff meeting, providing time for grade-level meetings, and providing staff PL, are common

activities that might need to take place before de-implementation (DeWitt, 2022b).

- Initially, all-staff meetings are centered around assessing the instructional practice, providing leaders with an opportunity to gauge staff's readiness and willingness to discontinue the practice.
- The team then organizes PL sessions and subsequent coaching for staff to phase out the ineffective instructional method.
- Tailored communication strategies are developed for staff, families, and students, explaining the discontinuation of the practice and creating channels for feedback.
- The reversal of the instructional practice is closely monitored through classroom observations, keeping track of how often the practice is used and identifying any unintended effects on student outcomes. (Evidence for Learning, 2022).

4. **De-implementation outcomes:** Explains how staff will know the de-implementation is occurring, and whether or not it is “feasible and doable” (Evidence for learning).

- Short-term results involve staff and other involved parties indicating growing acceptability through periodic anonymous "pulse checks" surveys (Evidence for Learning). These surveys are conducted at regular intervals to gather feedback. Teachers should report reduced engagement with the instructional practice during this period.
- In the medium term, classroom observations reveal that the instructional practice is no longer being utilized in classrooms. Teachers report that they have the capacity to allocate more time to other, more effective teaching methods during this phase (Evidence for Learning).

5. **Outcome:** Explains how staff, students, and the school will benefit.

**Check for Acceptability and Fidelity:** Acceptability measures the extent to which stakeholders, such as staff, parents, and students, are supportive of the changes being made. Rather than viewing it as a binary "ready" or "not ready" state, think of acceptability as a continuum (Evidence for Learning, 2022). Conduct surveys and assessments to gauge where stakeholders fall on this continuum. Additionally, fidelity examines whether the de-implementation activities align with their intended purpose. It is important to also determine how the team will monitor both acceptability and fidelity throughout the de-implementation process (Evidence for Learning).

**Communication:** Effective communication strategies play a crucial role in de-implementation. Embed communication strategies within the team's de-implementation plan to address any issues that may arise. Messages should clearly communicate the purpose and rationale behind the changes, provide updates on progress where relevant, and be tailored to different stakeholder groups (Evidence for Learning, 2022). It's essential to carefully consider the frequency and methods of communication to ensure transparency and understanding among all involved parties.

**Professional Learning (PL):** Any significant change process necessitates professional learning tailored to meet the diverse needs of staff. The de-implementation plan should incorporate professional learning, specifying what needs to be learned and addressing the equally important aspect of "unlearning" (Evidence for Learning, 2022). This acknowledges the cognitive challenge that comes with changing established practices, especially those that have been in place for an extended period. The plan should outline who will be involved in the professional learning process and the required resources.

## ***Deliver***

In the "Deliver" step of the de-implementation process, the primary focus is on supporting staff, monitoring progress, problem-solving, and adapting strategies to

ensure the successful implementation of the de-implementation plan (Evidence for Learning, 2022). This step should be carried out in alignment with the developed de-implementation plan, which serves as the guiding framework.

**Leadership and Ongoing Support:** Effective leadership is crucial during this phase, as it plays a key role in providing continuous support to staff, managing expectations, and monitoring the overall process (Evidence for Learning, 2022). Leaders guide the ongoing efforts and ensure that everyone is on the same page.

**Flexibility and Consultation:** Flexibility is essential during any change process, but it should be exercised in consultation with stakeholders. While the core design of the de-implementation plan should remain stable, adjustments may be needed in terms of the intensity or quantity of specific activities, such as professional learning. Significant changes to the core plan design may necessitate revisiting earlier stages, such as 'Explore' and 'Prepare' (Evidence for Learning).

**Reinforcement Through Professional Learning:** Professional learning activities initiated in the 'Prepare' phase should continue as the delivery phase begins. These activities may take various forms but should always have a clear and explicit purpose directly related to the change process. DeWitt (2022b) emphasizes that professional learning “may take place during faculty meetings, after school, and in professional learning community (PLC) or department meetings.”

**Learning from Data:** It is essential to make informed adaptations based on the data collected throughout the process. Rather than treating data analysis as a one-time evaluation at the end of the delivery stage, continuous investigation and reflection on data are essential. This helps in responding to challenges as they arise and ensures that the de-implementation process stays on track (Evidence for Learning, 2022).

Throughout the 'Deliver' phase, educators should remain prepared to address challenges, utilize existing structures or create new solutions, provide ongoing support for skill and knowledge development, verify that the approach is being

de-implemented as intended, and be open to adjusting strategies based on de-implementation data (Evidence for Learning, 2022).

## ***Sustain***

Sustaining the de-implementation of an approach is a critical step to ensure that the practice doesn't return. It's important to plan for sustainability right from the beginning of the de-implementation process. When assessing the success of the de-implementation, look for evidence that the targeted approach is no longer in use. Initially, it may be beneficial to look for opportunities to reward or recognize staff members who have effectively de-implemented the practice (Evidence for Learning).

**Ongoing PL:** As time goes on, there might be a need for additional professional learning to address staff turnover, the reappearance of old habits, or changes in policies that could reintroduce the practice (Evidence for Learning). The "sustain" phase should focus on maintaining the progress made during the "prepare" and "deliver" phases. Since breaking old habits can be challenging, it's essential to continue offering tailored learning and unlearning opportunities as needed.

**Monitoring:** Once your evaluation confirms that the practice is no longer in use, the resources and efforts previously allocated for monitoring and evaluation can be redirected to other priorities.

## **Section 2 Key Terms**

Acceptability - The extent to which stakeholders, including staff, parents, and students, are supportive of the changes being made during the de-implementation process.

Data-Driven Decision-Making - The practice of using collected data throughout the de-implementation process to inform and guide actions, adjustments, and problem-solving.

De-Implementation Plan - A comprehensive and well-defined roadmap created during the "Prepare" phase that outlines the steps, goals, activities, and monitoring methods for discontinuing an ineffective practice.

Fidelity - The extent to which de-implementation activities align with their intended purpose and are executed as planned.

Sustainability - The ongoing maintenance of the de-implementation outcomes, ensuring that the discontinued practice does not return.

Unlearning - The cognitive process of letting go of established practices, particularly those that have been in place for an extended period.

Readiness - The assessment of a school's and its staff's readiness for de-implementation, conducted during the "Prepare" phase. It involves determining whether the necessary conditions and support are in place for the changes ahead.

## Section 2 Reflection Questions

1. In your opinion, what role does data play in identifying priorities for de-implementation? How can data-driven decision-making benefit the de-implementation process?
2. Think about the process of "unlearning" mentioned in the section. Are there any established practices you find challenging to "unlearn"? How might this affect your readiness for de-implementation?
3. As you consider the four stages of the de-implementation cycle (Explore, Prepare, Deliver, Sustain), which stage do you think might present the greatest challenge in your educational context? Why?



4. Imagine your school decides to de-implement a practice you currently use in your teaching. How would you approach this change, and what support or resources would you need to effectively discontinue the practice while maintaining your professional identity?

## Section 2 Activities

1. **Create a De-Implementation Plan:** Select one specific practice, policy, or strategy within your educational context that you believe should be de-implemented. Develop a detailed plan for initiating this change, including the rationale, stakeholders involved, and steps for implementation.
  - a. To do this, create a table in a Doc with the headers discussed above: *Problem, De-Implementation Description, De-Implementation Activities, De-Implementation Outcomes, Outcome*. Use this as a graphic organizer to plan your de-implementation.
2. **Stakeholder Surveys:** Create surveys to gather feedback from students, parents, and fellow teachers about the practice or intervention you want to de-implement. Analyze the responses to gauge acceptability and gather insights into potential challenges.
3. **Student-Led Inquiry:** Encourage your students to participate in the de-implementation process. Challenge them to identify classroom practices or policies they find ineffective or irrelevant to their learning. Have students conduct research, present their findings, and propose alternative approaches.
4. **Interactive Workshop:** Prepare an interactive workshop or presentation for your school's professional development day. The workshop should focus on the de-implementation cycle and provide practical strategies for identifying and discontinuing ineffective practices. Present the workshop to your colleagues.

## Section 3: Challenges and Barriers to De-Implementation

Navigating the terrain of de-implementation can be a challenging journey, but one that is crucial for educational improvement. As schools embark on this path, it's essential to be aware of the potential pitfalls and complexities that may arise. By understanding these obstacles, educators can better equip themselves to effectively de-implement practices that no longer serve the school's educational goals and make way for more impactful approaches.

### Lack of Understanding

One issue is the potential for de-implementation to be misunderstood and lead to non-compliance or "lawlessness" within an educational context (DeWitt, 2022b). To address this, it's crucial to establish formal processes for de-implementation and communicate these clearly during staff meetings. Additionally, promoting discussions and understanding of de-implementation at the superintendent and district office levels can encourage educators to engage openly in this process (DeWitt).

### Unlearning and Relearning

Another challenge in de-implementation is the need for educators to unlearn old practices and relearn new ones, which can be difficult given their conditioning to follow established rules and routines (DeWitt, 2022b). Unlearning involves discarding outdated mental models, while relearning is the process of gaining and embodying new knowledge (DeWitt). To facilitate this process, educators can approach professional learning by critically assessing its relevance to their current practices and objective evidence of its effectiveness. Addressing emotional reactions to new ideas and reevaluating team dynamics can also aid in unlearning and relearning during de-implementation efforts (DeWitt).

## Emotions

Emotions and personal preferences often present significant barriers to the de-implementation of ineffective practices in education. Educators, like everyone else, can become emotionally attached to routines and methods they are accustomed to, even if these approaches are no longer effective. These attachments can manifest as resistance to change, leading educators to cling to familiar practices, even in the face of evidence suggesting their ineffectiveness. Moreover, preferences and comfort zones can cloud judgment, making it challenging to objectively evaluate the success or failure of an instructional approach. Overcoming these emotional barriers requires a willingness to confront one's own biases, engage in open discussions, and prioritize evidence-based decision-making. By acknowledging the role of emotions and preferences in the de-implementation process, educators can better navigate these barriers and pave the way for positive changes in their teaching practices.

## Unclear Accountability

Unclear lines of accountability represent a significant challenge in the de-implementation process within educational settings. When it's unclear who is responsible for identifying, planning, and overseeing the removal of ineffective practices, progress can stall. The absence of clear accountability structures can lead to confusion and delays, as individuals and teams may assume that someone else is taking charge (DeWitt, 2022b). To address this challenge, it's essential to establish clear roles and responsibilities, outlining who is responsible for driving the de-implementation efforts, monitoring progress, and ensuring that the process remains on track (DeWitt).

## **Lack of Training**

Additionally, a lack of training poses another substantial challenge during de-implementation. When teachers are asked to transition from old, ineffective practices to new, evidence-based ones, they may not have the necessary training or support to make this shift effectively. Inadequate training can result in resistance, frustration, and a reluctance to embrace change (DeWitt, 2022b). To overcome this challenge, schools and districts should invest in professional development programs that provide teachers with the knowledge, skills, and resources needed to implement new practices successfully. These training initiatives should be ongoing and tailored to the specific needs of educators, ensuring that they feel confident and well-prepared to adopt and sustain the desired changes.

## **Lack of Awareness**

The lack of awareness regarding the ineffectiveness of certain educational practices can be a significant barrier to successful de-implementation efforts. In many cases, educators may genuinely believe that the practices they are using are beneficial for students because they may not have access to up-to-date research or data on their effectiveness. This lack of awareness can manifest as resistance to change, as educators may be hesitant to abandon practices they perceive as valuable.

To address this challenge, it is crucial for educational institutions to prioritize ongoing professional development and provide teachers with access to current research and evidence-based practices. Schools and districts can organize workshops, seminars, and training sessions that focus on the latest educational research and help educators critically assess the effectiveness of their existing practices. Additionally, promoting a culture of continuous improvement and open communication within educational communities can encourage teachers to share

their experiences and concerns about specific practices, fostering a more informed and collaborative environment.

### Section 3 Key Terms

Accountability - Accountability refers to the clear delineation of roles and responsibilities for identifying, planning, and overseeing the removal of ineffective practices during the de-implementation process.

Non-compliance - Non-compliance occurs when de-implementation is misunderstood or misinterpreted, leading to a situation where individuals or groups within an educational context do not adhere to formal processes for discontinuing ineffective practices. Non-compliance can hinder the de-implementation process.

Relearning - Relearning involves the process of gaining and embodying new knowledge and practices. In the context of de-implementation, educators may need to relearn new, evidence-based practices after unlearning old, ineffective ones.

### Section 3 Reflection Questions

1. How do you personally react to the idea of de-implementing practices you've been using for a long time? Are there any emotional attachments or preferences influencing your perspective?
2. What strategies can you employ to overcome potential resistance to change, whether in yourself or among your colleagues, when it comes to de-implementation?
3. Reflect on a time when you had to unlearn something in your teaching practice. What challenges did you face, and how did you navigate them?

## Section 3 Activities

1. **Reflect on Personal Biases:** Take some time to reflect on your own biases and emotional attachments to certain teaching practices. Write down instances where these biases might have influenced your decisions. How can you address these biases moving forward?
2. **Explore Evidence-Based Alternatives:** Research evidence-based alternatives to the practices you've identified in the previous activity. Compile a list of new strategies or methods that align with current educational research.
3. **Accountability Mapping:** Create a visual representation (e.g., a flowchart or diagram) of the accountability structure in your school or district. Highlight roles and responsibilities related to de-implementation and suggest improvements if needed.
4. **Peer Discussion:** Initiate a discussion with colleagues about their experiences with de-implementation. Share your insights and challenges and encourage them to do the same. Collaboratively brainstorm strategies for overcoming common barriers.

## Conclusion

The goal of this course was to equip educators with invaluable insights and skills to navigate the complex terrain of educational change. Participants should now possess the knowledge and tools to critically assess and shed ineffective practices, making room for innovative and evidence-based approaches that enhance student learning and outcomes. De-implementation is not merely a concept; it is a transformative process that empowers schools to shape the future of education. By embracing this journey, educators will not only elevate their own teaching practices but also contribute to the advancement of the entire educational field. As participants continue their professional journeys, they should remember that

de-implementation is an ongoing commitment to excellence, one that ensures their students receive the best education possible.

## Case Study

Mantis High School (MHS), a diverse urban institution, had long employed a zero tolerance policy for disciplinary infractions. However, it became increasingly evident that this policy was not achieving its intended goals. Instead, it led to high suspension rates, disproportionate consequences for minority students, and a hostile school environment. MHS began by conducting a thorough analysis of disciplinary data, which revealed the disparities and ineffectiveness of the zero tolerance policy. Still, de-implementation of the zero tolerance policy at MHS faced several challenges, including resistance from stakeholders who were skeptical about abandoning a policy they believed maintained discipline and safety, and a need to develop alternative disciplinary strategies that would maintain order while addressing student behavioral issues effectively.



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