

THE LEARNING Principal

FOR A DYNAMIC COMMUNITY OF SCHOOL LEADERS ENSURING SUCCESS FOR ALL STUDENTS

How can you better support teachers' growth?

BY ELLIE DRAGO-SEVERSON

Supporting teacher growth requires appreciating different learning and career needs, preferences, and developmental orientations.

Principals are already likely to be aware of some reasons why different teachers prefer particular practices — age, educational background, career phase. School leaders also benefit by knowing *how* adults make sense of their experiences, including how they will make sense of initiatives aimed at supporting their professional growth. Having this developmental perspective will enhance a principal's ability to identify practices that aim to *inform* and those that aim to *transform*. Transformative practices consider how a person *makes meaning* of the experience in order to grow from participation and help us to see how differences in behaviors and thinking are often related to differences in how a person *constructs* his experience.

Robert Kegan (1982, 1994) identifies three ways of knowing that are most common in adulthood and show how adults make meaning of their experiences in different ways. He focuses on differences in *how* we know, as

opposed to *what* we know. Kegan's theory is guided by three premises: a) how adults actively *make sense* of their experiences, b) the ways adults make meaning of their experiences can *become more complex* over time, and c) how "holding environments" (1982) can enhance or inhibit growth.

The different ways of knowing most common in adulthood are *instrumental*, *socializing*, and *self-authoring*. These are not associated with gender, age, or life phase. Put simply, a person's way of knowing refers to how she understands her role as a teacher, leader, and learner, and how she thinks about what makes a good teacher and principal, what constitutes effective practice, and the types of supports and challenges needed in order to grow.

INSTRUMENTAL WAY OF KNOWING

A teacher with an instrumental way of knowing has a "what's in it for me" perspective. This teacher understands the world in very concrete terms and does not yet have the capacity for abstract thinking or for making generalizations. In general, an instrumental

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Do less, achieve more

"We must learn to distinguish between what is 'merely important' and what is 'wildly important.'"

— Stephen Covey

Some things contribute a great deal to achieving leaders' goals. Other things make little difference. The ability to focus our efforts on the former category is essential in achieving the results leaders most desire more effectively and efficiently. That, in turn, leads to a more balanced and less stressful style of work and life. A term given to this way of thinking is "the 80/20 principal" (also known as the "Pareto Principle").

"The 80/20 Principle asserts that a minority of causes, inputs, or effort usually lead to a majority of the results, outputs, or rewards," Richard Koch claims in *The 80/20 Principle: The Secret to Success by Achieving More with Less* (p. 4). He adds: "Every person I have known who has taken the 80/20 Principle seriously has emerged with useful, and in some case life-changing, insights" (pp. 24-25).

- Koch's views can be summarized this way:
- "A few things are always much more important than most things" (p. 125).
 - "80% of achievement is attained in 20% of the time taken. ... 80% of happiness is experienced in 20% of life. ... Remember that these are hypotheses to be tested against your experience. ... It doesn't matter what the exact percentages are and in any case it is almost impossible to measure them precisely" (pp. 146-147).
 - "The objective of 80/20 thinking is to

generate action which will make sharp improvements in your life and that of others" (p. 136).

- "For the 80% of activities that give you only 20% of results, the ideal is to eliminate them. You may need to do this before allocating more time to the high-value activities. ... There is normally great scope to do things differently within your existing circumstances. ... Since there is little value in the activities you want to displace, people may not actually notice if you stop doing them" (p. 158).

- "There is no shortage of time. In fact, we are positively awash with it. And for the most talented individuals, it is often tiny amounts of time that make all the difference. ... The 80/20 Principle says that we should act less. Action drives out thought. ... It is not the shortage of time that should worry us, but the tendency for the majority of time to be spent in low-quality ways" (p. 149).

CONSIDER:

- Identify the "20%" activities that make the largest difference and spend more time in those activities.
- Identify the "80%" activities and act with urgency to reduce or eliminate them from your schedule.

Here's a simple example that can make a large difference in the professional life of busy school leaders: Koch argues (and I concur) that "... 80% of the value of a book can be found in 20% or fewer of its pages and absorbed in 20% of the time most people would take to read it through" (p. 25). While there are exceptions, of course, for particular kinds of subjects and purposes, the most professional reading could be done in relatively modest amount of time with improved understanding of major ideas.

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Koch, R. (1998). *The 80/20 principle: The secret to success by achieving more with less.* New York: Doubleday.



Pat Roy is co-author of *Moving NSDC's Staff Development Standards Into Practice: Innovation Configurations* (NSDC, 2003)

Let's be practical

The sheer number of tasks expected of principals is mounting every day. Principals need to be excellent managers of people and materials. They also need to play a critical role in leading their staff in instructional issues. When faced with the prospect of also needing to understand and use educational research, one principal chastised me by saying, "Let's be *practical*. Do you really want me to spend my time reading educational research?" My answer is **yes**.

Let's consider one of the implications of the staff development standards — professional development programs require a plan for long-term support and assistance. Expecting and supporting staff members to use new instructional strategies or curriculum materials means focused support for two to three years. Such planning and implementation becomes a major expenditure of staff time and funding. Would it be *practical* for the leader to ensure that the new program had evidence of impact on student learning? And that the students in the studies were similar to students in your school? Such questions can be answered by reading specific and focused educational research.

In the late 1990s, NSDC examined 496 professional development programs to determine if they achieved results related to student learning. Many were well-known initiatives conducted in multiple sites, involving thousands of teachers and administrators, and costing thousands of dollars. Yet, only 26 programs (or 5%) had evidence of impact on student learning (Killion, 1999). Would it be *practical* for a principal to know whether an investment of time

and energy would result in student learning? Again, this question can be answered by reading educational research.

Principals, then, need to **read and interpret educational research**. Not just any research but research that focuses on programs and instructional strategies being considered for school use. Promotional materials or journal articles or summaries are not sufficient — the actual research studies are necessary. In fact, this might be the first test for a new program: what research studies show evidence of impact on student learning. If they don't have this information, it's time to look at other programs.

Secondly, if that research is supplied, principals need to be able to read the studies and determine whether it is high-quality research. This might include examining **whether appropriate research designs were employed, examining and interpreting results, and determining whether the results**

can be generalized. There is an old adage that you can make research say anything. That isn't true if you know how to be a critical consumer of research.

So, is it *practical* for the principal to become a critical consumer of research? It seems eminently practical for principals to know that the programs they are implementing have evidence of impact on student learning. The best way to determine those results is being able to evaluate and use educational research. It would be impractical to do otherwise.

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Killion, J. (1999). *What works in the middle: Results-based staff development*. Oxford, OH: National Staff Development Council.

RESEARCH-BASED

Staff development that improves the learning of all students prepares educators to apply research to decision making.

Learn more about the NSDC standards, www.nsd.org/standards/index.cfm

Principals frequently talk about the “resisters” in their buildings. Those are the teachers who oppose any new program, often actively recruiting others to their point of view. Often, those “resisters” are blamed when a program fails to take hold.

Many principals seem to believe that the best course of action is to simply ignore them in the hopes that they will go away (or transfer to another building).

But, in the mid-1970s, researchers identified seven Stages of Concern that educators are likely to move through when they confront any new change proposition. Most educators will go through all of the stages, although some will skip past one and some will have several concerns simultaneously, says Shirley Hord, one of the researchers who developed the model.

The same researchers proposed actions that principals could take to address educators at each of these stages.

WHAT A SCHOOL LEADER NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT ...

7 Stages of Concern

The Concerns-Based Adoption Model outlines seven Stages of Concern that offer a way to understand and then address educators’ common concerns about change.

STAGE 0: AWARENESS

Aware that an innovation is being introduced but not really interested or concerned with it.

- “I am not concerned about this innovation.”
- “I don’t really know what this innovation involves.”

STAGE 1: INFORMATIONAL

Interested in some information about the change.

- “I want to know more about this innovation.”
- “There is a lot I don’t know about this but I’m reading and asking questions.”

STAGE 2: PERSONAL

Wants to know the personal impact of the change.

- “How is this going to affect me?”
- “I’m concerned about whether I can do this.”
- “How much control will I have over the way I use this?”

STAGE 3: MANAGEMENT

Concerned about how the change will be managed in practice.

- “I seem to be spending all of my time getting materials ready.”
- “I’m concerned that we’ll be spending more time in meetings.”
- “Where will I find the time to plan my lessons or take care of the record keeping required to do this well?”

STAGE 4: CONSEQUENCE

Interested in the impact on students or the school.

- “How is using this going to affect students?”
- “I’m concerned about whether I can change this in order to ensure that students will learn better as a result of introducing this idea.”

STAGE 5: COLLABORATION

Interested in working with colleagues to make the change effective.

- “I’m concerned about relating what I’m doing to what other instructors are doing.”
- “I want to see more cooperation among teachers as we work with this innovation.”

STAGE 6: REFOCUSING

Begins refining the innovation to improve student learning results.

- “I have some ideas about something that would work even better than this.”

Addressing Individual Concerns

To help bring about change, you first must know an individual's concerns. Then those concerns must be addressed. While there are no set formulas, here are some suggestions for addressing the stages of concern.

STAGE 0: AWARENESS CONCERNS

- If possible, involve teachers in discussions and decisions about the innovation and its implementation.
- Share enough information to arouse interest, but not so much it overwhelms.
- Acknowledge that a lack of awareness is expected and reasonable and that there are no foolish questions.

STAGE 1: INFORMATIONAL CONCERNS

- Provide clear and accurate information about the innovation.
- Use several ways to share information — verbally, in writing, and through available media. Communicate with large and small groups and individuals.
- Help teachers see how the innovation relates to their current practices — the similarities and the differences.

STAGE 2: PERSONAL CONCERNS

- Legitimize the existence and expression of personal concerns.
- Use personal notes and conversations to provide encouragement and reinforce personal adequacy.
- Connect these teachers with others whose personal concerns have diminished and who will be supportive.

STAGE 3: MANAGEMENT CONCERNS

- Clarify the steps and components of the innovation.
- Provide answers that address the small specific “how-to” issues.
- Demonstrate exact and practical solutions to the logistical problems that contribute to these concerns.

STAGE 4: CONSEQUENCE CONCERNS

- Provide individuals with opportunities to visit other settings where the innovation is in use and to attend conferences on the topic.
- Make sure these teachers are not overlooked. Give positive feedback and needed support.
- Find opportunities for these teachers to share their skills with others.

STAGE 5: COLLABORATION CONCERNS

- Provide opportunities to develop skills for working collaboratively.
- Bring together, from inside and outside the school, those who are interested in working collaboratively.
- Use these teachers to assist others.

STAGE 6: REFOCUSING CONCERNS

- Respect and encourage the interest these individuals have for finding a better way.
- Help these teachers channel their ideas and energies productively.
- Help these teachers access the resources they need to refine their ideas and put them into practice.

To learn more about change, see the resources in the NSDC Library, www.nsd.org/library/change.cfm

How can you better support teachers' growth?

IMPLICATIONS OF HAVING A DEVELOPMENTAL PERSPECTIVE FOR TEACHER GROWTH

1. School leaders can benefit from a developmental perspective when supporting teachers because they will experience professional learning opportunities in different ways.
2. A developmental vocabulary helps us to better understand adults and to move away from labeling adults based on behaviors.
3. Teachers, like all adults, need different supports and challenges, which can be embedded in the four pillar practices.
4. Consideration of the developmental match between the expectations of a school culture and adults' capacity to meet them will help shape learning centers that support adult growth and lifelong learning.

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knower perceives others either as helpers or obstacles to having his own needs met.

These teachers will grow if they are encouraged to open up to multiple perspectives that will help broaden their perspective and support growth over time.

Principals can support instrumental knowers by:

- Setting clear goals and expectations;
- Providing step-by-step procedures;
- Sharing examples of rules, purposes, and goals — and how to share them with others; and
- Engaging in dialogue that provides specific advice, skills, and information about practice.

Instrumental knowers will grow when they:

- Learn about multiple perspectives through dialogue;
- Engage in tasks that demand abstract thinking and are scaffolded through the process;
- Are encouraged to move beyond “correct” solutions and toward other perspectives; and
- Are exposed to multiple perspectives that can build abstract thinking and increase perspective broadening capacities.

SOCIALIZING WAY OF KNOWING

A teacher who makes meaning primarily with a socializing way of knowing has an enhanced capacity for reflection. The guiding question for the socializing knower is “will the valued authority still love me/value me/ like me?” Unlike an instrumental knower, this person has the developmental capacity to think abstractly and subordinates her own needs and desires to those of others by understanding the feelings of others. But she does not have a perspective on her relationships. Gaining the approval and acceptance of others is of utmost importance to people with this way of knowing. Socializing knowers feel responsible for other people's feelings and hold other people responsible for their feelings. Criticism and conflict is experienced as a threat to the self.

To support growth, principals can encourage these adults to look inward and to express their own perspective rather than adopting authorities' solutions and perspectives.

Principals can support socializing knowers by:

- Ensuring that these learners feel that they are known and accepted;
- Confirming, acknowledging, and accepting their own beliefs;
- Encouraging supervisors and colleagues to create for them an environment in which they feel safe enough to take risks and share their perspectives;
- Inviting them to share their perspectives in pairs or smaller groups before sharing with larger groups; and
- Assuring them that differences of opinion are okay and that relationships are not jeopardized by these kinds of differences.

Socializing knowers will grow when they are encouraged to:

- Develop their *own* beliefs and become less dependent on others' approval;
- Construct their own values and standards, rather than co-constructing them with others;
- Accept conflicting points of view without feeling threatened;
- Separate their own feelings and responsibilities from another person's; and
- Distinguish their own perspective from their need to be accepted.

SELF-AUTHORING WAY OF KNOWING

A teacher with a self-authoring way of knowing can take responsibility for his own internal values and standards. He can identify (and is identified *with*) abstract values, principles, and longer-term purposes and can prioritize and integrate competing values. He can reflect on and regulate his relationships. Self-authoring knowers are concerned about their own competence and performance and recognize that conflict is a natural part of work and life that can enhance their own perspectives and help achieve larger organizational goals.

The guiding question for this teacher is “am I maintaining my own standards and values? Am I competent? Am I achieving my goals and being guided by my ideals?”

Principals can help these teachers become

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less invested in their own perspectives and more open to opposing views.

Principals can support self-authoring knowers by providing opportunities for them to:

- Learn about diverse points of view;
- Analyze and critique ideas and explore their own goals;
- Learn from the *process*;
- Learn about their own competencies;
- Critique their own practices and vision;
- Emphasize competency; and
- Invite demonstration of competencies and dialogue.

Self-authoring knowers will grow when they:

- Have opportunities to let go of their perspective and embrace alternatives;
- Accept diverse problem-solving approaches that differ from their own;
- Set aside their standards for practice and open up to other values; and
- Accept diverse ways to explore problems.

When a principal is aware of these varying developmental needs, how does he differentiate his support for teachers? Consider how a principal would deal with different teachers during a professional goal-setting process.

During goal-setting, *instrumental* knowers are likely to experience a principal's feedback as if they are right *or* wrong. These teachers look to the principals to give them the right goals and a step-by-step process to achieving them.

Teachers with a *socializing* way of knowing view principals as authorities who know the goals that they *should* pursue. But socializing knowers have an internal sense of their goals. What they need is to have their principals acknowledge that these are the appropriate goals.

On the other hand, teachers with a *self-authoring* way of knowing will weigh their principal's perspective against their own internal authority to decide how to improve their practice.

SUPPORTING TEACHER GROWTH

Knowing about developmental differences can help school leaders implement professional learning practices that facilitate teacher growth.

Any of the four practices in particular, which I call "pillar practices," would provide growth opportunities for teachers, regardless of their way of knowing (Drago-Severson, 2004).

- **Working in teams** enables adults to question their own and other people's philosophies of teaching and learning; the meaning of the ways they implement a school's core values in the curriculum and school context; reflect on their school's mission; and to make decisions collaboratively. This practice creates a context wherein teachers can grow from new and diverse perspectives.

- By **assuming leadership roles**, teachers share power and decision making. A leadership role is an opportunity to raise not only one's own consciousness but also a group's consciousness. These roles provide a way for principals to benefit from teachers' expertise and knowledge.

- **Collegial inquiry** is an example of a larger developmental concept known as reflective practice, which can occur individually or in groups. I define collegial inquiry as a shared dialogue that involves reflecting on one's assumptions and values as part of the learning process. It is a practice that creates a context for adults to reflect on their practice, proposals for change, and schoolwide issues (e.g. developing a school mission). Collegial inquiry provides opportunities to develop more complex perspectives by listening to and learning from others.

- **Mentoring** creates an opportunity for broadening perspectives, examining assumptions, and sharing expertise and leadership. It takes many forms, including pairing experienced teachers with new teachers or university interns, pairing teachers who have deep knowledge of school mission with other teachers, and group mentoring. Mentoring enables adults to explore their own thinking and contradictions, enhancing self-development.

Understanding a developmental perspective and employing any one of these four *pillar* practices enables school leaders to provide a supportive learning environment for teachers to develop greater awareness of their beliefs and reflect with others to envision alternative ways of thinking or behaving. ■

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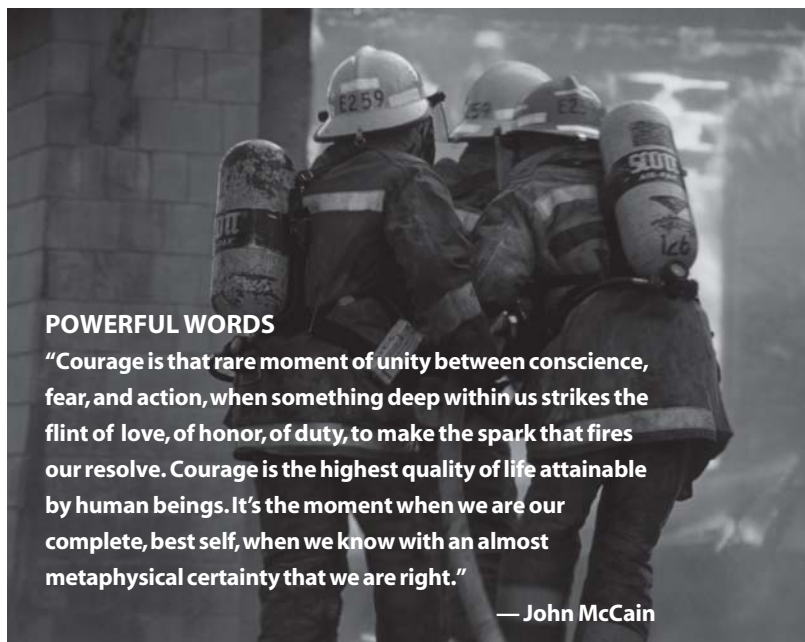
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POWERFUL WORDS

"Courage is that rare moment of unity between conscience, fear, and action, when something deep within us strikes the flint of love, of honor, of duty, to make the spark that fires our resolve. Courage is the highest quality of life attainable by human beings. It's the moment when we are our complete, best self, when we know with an almost metaphysical certainty that we are right."

— John McCain

NSDC CALENDAR

April 1: Deadline for nominations for NSDC 2006 Awards. For information, see www.nsdco.org/connect/awards.cfm

April 1: Early bird deadline for registration for NSDC Summer Conference for School-Based Staff Developers, Washington, D.C. (July 17-19).

April 15: Postmark deadline for ballots for NSDC Board of Trustees election.

April 25-26: Powerful Designs workshop, Raleigh, N.C. For information, see www.nsdco.org/connect/workshops.cfm

April 26-27: Innovation Configuration workshop, Raleigh, N.C. For information, see www.nsdco.org/connect/workshops.cfm

May 1: Deadline to apply to join the School-Based Staff Developers Learning Community. For information, see www.nsdco.org/connect/projects/schoolbased.cfm

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