

# THE LEARNING Principal®

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

## TAP INTO EXPERIENCE

*Teachers take the lead in school reform*

BY VALERIE VON FRANK

**R**obyn Magdic taught for 24 years without being recognized as a master teacher.

Then, four years ago, she got a \$10,000 raise to teach fewer students — but other teachers.

Under the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP) in South Carolina, Magdic became a designated master teacher.

The Milken Family Foundation created TAP in 2000 to offer more professional opportunities for classroom teachers. The program has several emphases:

- Advancement to master or mentor teacher rank, with additional stipends for increased responsibilities.
- Job-embedded professional learning through regular “cluster” meetings during the school day during which teachers analyze data and strategize methods for improving their practices.



- Accountability based on teacher evaluations and student improvement using a value-added assessment system, with bonuses for different levels of performance.

“A lot attracted me about TAP,” said Maureen

Tiller, principal at Bell Street Middle School in Clinton, S.C., where Magdic is a teacher.

“As a building-level principal, many times you know there needs to be a focus on instruction, on professional development, but nobody really tells you how to do that within the schedule of the day. Everybody wants to do that, but there’s not necessarily a structure for it. TAP provides that structure for constant professional growth, as well as instruction and improved achievement in the classroom.”

At Bell Street, teachers work in grade-level teams, or clusters, for 60 to 80 minutes once or twice a week, examining student work, analyz-

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**WANDA LAW**

Principal, Sycamore  
Elementary School  
Sugar Hill, Ga.

**District:** Gwinnett  
County (Ga.) Public  
Schools

**Grades:** K-5

**Enrollment:** 1,300  
students

**Staff:** 100 teachers

One of 69 elementary buildings in Gwinnett County Public Schools, Sycamore is the most diverse among its neighbors in the northern corner, with a student population that is 50% white, 30% Hispanic, 15% African American. About 40% of students receive free or reduced-price lunch.

## Q&A Vision, communication keys to leading with coaches

BY VALERIE VON FRANK

**Q. Why did you want an instructional coach?**

I was making a lot of instructional changes at my school. I was doing a lot more collaborative planning; I was looking at peer observations; I was looking at common assessments, common instructional calendars, and I needed someone who could be a help and support to the teachers as I was making those changes. I feel when you make an instructional change, you have to have the support there to help teachers. Hiring a coach took a little bit of the unknown off the teachers.

Our students were performing. We met AYP each year, but as accountability increases, we want to be sure we're able to increase our performance. Our goal is to continue to be able to succeed. I want to be sure we're being proactive.

**Q. How did you decide on the coach's responsibilities?**

I gave the coach my vision, and I asked her about the training she'd had through NSDC, what she could do, and the roles of an instructional coach. We talked about those roles and how she could do them. Together we figured out what would work.

**Q. What is the school leader's role in helping the coach?**

To begin, the leader must explain the instructional coach's role to the staff. Teachers' first reaction is, 'We've been doing this for a long time, why are you changing what we do?' I had to explain what my expectations were of the coach, her job role, and what she was going to be doing. Then teachers had to see the coach as their link to me. If they asked for resources through the coach, I tried to support that finan-

cially. I also meet with the coach once a month, and she's a liaison for teachers' questions and concerns.

**Q. What advice do you have for school leaders just hiring a coach?**

Define the person's position. I did it, but I didn't do it immediately. This step also protects your coach. If you don't define the position, teachers will ask them to do bulletin boards or to make copies. As the administrator, I have to know my plan, what I want that person to do, and how they're going to be accountable for student achievement. Teachers have to realize *how* the coach is going to help.

It takes time. That's another thing I would tell principals trying this. Had I been forceful and ordered her into classrooms and to model lessons, I would have gotten a lot of resentment. It was hard for me to sit back and wait, but when I reflect on it, that's the best thing I could have done — to let her build those relation-

ships and let them ask her in instead of me forcing her in.

**Q. Do you have the coach help with administrative tasks?**

No, it would take away from the value, the confidentiality, and the relationship the coach has with teachers. Right now, she's the teachers' colleague, and that's important.

**Q. What should you look for in a coach?**

Their ability to work with people. Their knowledge on instruction and how to use resources. How they're going to build a relationship. Their knowledge of effective strategies of ways to help children — that's the knowledge piece they teach.

**"I feel when you make an instructional change, you have to have the support there to help teachers. Hiring a coach took a little bit of the unknown off the teachers."**



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

#### REFERENCES

- Hall, G. & Hord, S. (2001).** *Implementing change: Patterns, principles, and potholes.* Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Hord, S., Rutherford, W., Huling, L., & Hall, G. (1987).** *Taking charge of change.* Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Roy, P. & Hord, S. (2003).** *Moving NSDC's staff development standards into practice: Innovation configurations.* Oxford, OH: National Staff Development Council.

## What concerns do you have?

Many of the school administrators I work with acknowledge that changes in classroom practice take time. Such changes never happen overnight. Yet many leaders don't know what to do to create change beyond providing a workshop. They often are unfamiliar with the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM), developed by Gene Hall and Shirley Hord (2001), that helps principals and leadership teams **consider staff feelings and concerns when designing staff learning experiences** at the school (Roy & Hord, 2003, p. 91).

CBAM resulted from an exploration of how teachers respond when innovative practices are introduced. CBAM answers the question for many principals about how to help educators as they move through the change process. One CBAM tool, Stages of Concern, provides a way for leaders to support change. The tool describes seven patterns of concerns teachers have expressed as they adopted new practices.

Leaders can assess where teachers are in these stages in three ways:

1. Using one-legged interviews.
2. Through open-ended concerns statements.
3. With the Stages of Concern questionnaire.

One-legged interviews are short hallway or workroom conversations that probe issues related to using a new practice. They are called "one-legged" because the conversations should last as long as you can stand on one leg. Open-ended concerns statements could be a few short sentences staff write on an index card in response to a prompt such as, "When you think about differentiated instruction, what concerns do you have?" The final option to gauge teachers' stage of concern is using a formal 35-question survey

that yields data to identify the primary concerns of individuals or the total staff.

Principals and leadership teams collect and classify the data, then use the information to identify any major concerns which could be barriers to implementing new practices.

CBAM also offers interventions leaders can use to resolve concerns so that teachers can continue to develop their skills with new strategies and not stall at any particular stage. For example, when asked about concerns related to a curriculum mapping project, one teacher commented, "I'm concerned I won't be able to keep up." This concern is an example of the *personal* stage. Personal concern focuses on the "uncertainties related to the demands of the innovation" (Hall & Hord, 2001, p. 63). People wonder whether they are capable of using the new practices, whether they themselves are adequate, or what financial or personal costs are required. Interventions appropriate to the *personal* stage of concern include:

- Personal notes and conversations to encourage and reinforce their personal adequacy.
- Connecting teachers with supportive others.
- Showing how the innovation can be implemented sequentially. It is important to establish expectations that are attainable.
- Not pushing the use of an innovation, but encouraging and supporting it while maintaining expectations (Hord, Rutherford, Huling, & Hall, 1987, pp. 44-45).

Using CBAM, principals and leadership team members can confidently assess staff feelings and concerns, then use that information to design powerful professional learning that will support teachers in implementing new practices.

*See the tools, pp. 4-5, for help in using CBAM in your school.*

**Learning:** Staff development that improves the learning of all students applies knowledge about human learning and change.

# 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 to manage the change 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."



# Address individual concerns

To help bring about change, change leaders and facilitators 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 that 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.
- Use evidence about student success to provide positive feedback and guidance.
- Engage teachers in examining student work to share how they are implementing the innovation.

## 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.

**Source:** *Taking Charge of Change*, by Shirley Hord, William Rutherford, Leslie Huling-Austin, and Gene Hall, ASCD, 1987.

## Teachers take the lead in school reform

**“TAP provides that structure for constant professional growth, as well as instruction and improved achievement in the classroom.”**

— Maureen Tiller,  
Bell Street Middle  
School principal

**“This experience has taught me the power of excellent teaching, and what can happen when time and resources are focused on improving the skills of teachers in a school.”**

— Germaine Brown,  
Stewart Street  
Elementary School  
5th-grade mentor  
teacher

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ing data, and learning to improve their teaching strategies. They review their lesson plans and work out how they will incorporate their new learning in the upcoming week. Language arts teachers work alongside math and physical education instructors.

“It’s very focused,” Magdic said. “We look at student data and how students performed the week before, and we decide whether it’s time to move on or to adjust the strategy we’re working with. . . . Teachers bring in student work. Master teachers model new strategies that can be used in any content area—everybody in the school then is on the same page.”

“It’s a constant cycle embedded in the school day, in students’ needs and teaching needs,” Tiller noted.

Master teachers plan and facilitate these cluster meetings. The school’s two master teachers are paid an extra \$10,000 per year and work 10 days beyond the usual 184-day contract. They teach one to two classes, then spend the remainder of their day facilitating the cluster meetings, modeling, team teaching, and observing and providing specific feedback to teachers.

Mentor teachers, on the other hand, are full-time in the classroom, but take on advisory and some other duties, such as working on benchmark, nine-week assessments and disaggregating that data, to earn a stipend of \$5,000. They support teachers in their subject areas, much like department heads. They work an additional five days beyond the regular contractual year.

“Before TAP, teachers went to conferences or meetings at the district or state level and came back and maybe tried some of those things in their classrooms. That was the extent of professional learning,” Tiller said. “They might take a college course. It wasn’t necessarily led and targeted to what the instructional needs were in their room; it was based on whether or not some item on the conference bulletin looked like they would want to attend. Now professional learning looks very different.”

Tiller said teachers develop yearly individual action plans based on evaluations of their

instruction, with areas targeted for refinement (where they need to improve) and reinforcement (strengths to continue building on for maximum instructional impact). They develop their own plans for their professional learning, which might include book studies, conferences, visiting other schools or other peer visits. And, as they work in their clusters, they call on the master teachers for needed assistance. The master teachers help by team teaching, modeling, and providing structured feedback through regular walk-through observations, providing the level of support needed by each teacher.

“I’ve been through things where they said, ‘Do this program,’ like whole language, where it’s a proscribed program,” Magdic, the master teacher, said. “That’s not what this is. It’s really just professional learning, looking at student data and letting the children’s needs guide your decisions in instruction.”

A leadership team comprising the principal, assistant principals, two master teachers, and seven mentor teachers meets weekly after school to review student data, set learning goals, and monitor cluster group work and teachers’ growth plans.

“Teachers are given regular, targeted feedback on their instruction,” Tiller said, “not just somebody coming in and saying, ‘Oh, you did a great job,’ or ‘Oh, you really need to do something different,’ without opportunity to see what the teacher needs to do differently or what she’s doing well that she can build on to make a bigger difference for her kids.”

Tiller said the lure of performance bonuses, which over the last four years have ranged from \$350 to \$4,000, has helped attract teachers to her rural, Title I school. She points out that teachers who earn their master’s degrees, National Board Certification, and who then also take on leadership roles can substantially increase their earnings, even aside from the performance bonuses. (South Carolina pays teachers more for National Board Certification.)

“This is rewarding teachers who have for years taken on those responsibilities, and we’re

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## OTHER TAP SUCCESS STORIES

**Forest Hills Elementary in Rapides Parish, La.,** where 84% of students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, adopted the program in 2004-05 and within two years saw its School Performance Score rise from 105.2 to 124.5, the greatest growth in the parish. It was named a Distinguished Title 1 School in 2007 by the National Association of State Title I Directors and the top high-poverty school in the state in 2008 by the Louisiana Department of Education.

**Stewart Street Elementary School in Gadsden County, Fla.,** raised its state rating from an F to a B between 2005 and 2007 and made Adequate Yearly Progress.

TAP is currently used at more than 180 campuses across the nation, with more than 5,000 teachers.

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compensating them and stepping it up a notch,” Tiller said. Retention also is improved through the higher salaries, she said.

Tiller has reallocated staff and used state technical assistance money and Title I money to pay her master and mentor teachers and for the school time used for professional learning, which generally is scheduled while students are in activity periods.

“All of this could have been done without TAP, but we would have to have somebody really phenomenal at the helm to come up with all those ideas making sure the structure is complete, especially in regards to the professional development piece,” Tiller said.

A Milken Foundation grant, however, funds the teacher bonuses. The school has earned scores of five, the highest value-added rating possible, in four of the last five years from TAP, qualifying teachers for the bonuses. The scores are based on student gains over the prior year and teacher evaluations. While Bell Street state achievement test scores may not be at the highest levels, Tiller said, each year shows students gaining more than a year’s growth in learning, a score of four on the TAP measurement. A five indicates two years’ growth.

Tiller said the approach to data is another piece that would be difficult for the school to carry out without TAP. Teachers are evaluated on specific elements of instruction, such as standards and objectives, questioning, lesson structure and pacing, and more.

“We really drill down the data and determine, ‘Are these kids really growing?’” Tiller said. “You might have a child that continues to score proficient (on the state exam), but isn’t making more than a year’s growth, but really we should be making more progress with that student. So we

talk about value-added scores. . . . We’ve seen an overall increase in student growth.”

A 2007 study by researchers at the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching, which now administers the TAP program, found that teachers in TAP schools outperformed control teachers, and fewer TAP teachers had students whose progress was below average (Solmon, White, Cohen, & Woo, 2007). In addition, the researchers noted that despite having more students in poverty, participating schools were at least as likely or slightly more to make Adequate Yearly Progress than all other schools in their states.

“This experience has taught me the power of excellent teaching, and what can happen when time and resources are focused on improving the skills of teachers in a school,” said Germaine Brown, a 5th-grade mentor teacher at Stewart Street Elementary School in Gadsden County, Fla., in testimony before the House Committee on Education and Labor in September 2007. “The results show that Gadsden County students are just as bright as those in any high-performing school. It doesn’t matter where our kids come from; it may be from homes with no running water, families of domestic violence, poorly structured households or households with no structure at all. But when they get here, it’s our job to nurture them and instill in them the belief that they can succeed. The TAP program has helped us to do that, and it has rewarded us for our success.”

Bell Street’s Magdic said the last four years, unlike the prior two decades, have changed her whole approach to teaching.

“When I think back about the kids I personally taught, I wonder if I did any kind of damage. Now, we’re learning all the time.

“It’s very collaborative,” she continued. “Nobody fails. Everybody’s there to help each other. It’s a team effort.” ■

## BELL STREET MIDDLE SCHOOL

Clinton, S.C.

Located in a rural community of about 8,000, Bell Street is an hour’s drive from the nearest midsize cities — Greenville or Columbia.

**Grades:** 6-8

**Enrollment:** 675

**Staff:** 56 teachers, including two master and seven mentor teachers

**Racial/ethnic mix:**

**White:** 57.2%

**Black:** 39.4%

**Hispanic:** 3.4%

**Free/reduced**

**lunch:** 78%

**Special education:** 17%

## REFERENCE

**Solmon, L.C., White, J.T., Cohen, D., & Woo, D. (2007, April).**

*The effectiveness of the Teacher Advancement Program.* National Institute for Excellence in Teaching. Available at [www.talentedteachers.org/pubs/effective\\_tap07\\_full.pdf](http://www.talentedteachers.org/pubs/effective_tap07_full.pdf).

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Join one of NSDC's online professional learning communities and get the best thinking of your member colleagues from across the country and around the world.

Teacher leaders can interact with other teachers, school-based coaches, instructional specialists, and all those concerned with professional learning at the school level to share ideas, questions, expertise, and resources. For example, one discussion is focused on professional development plans for instructional lead teachers.

The principal community is designed particularly for those who work as leaders at the building level — principals, assistant principals, and administrators concerned with professional learning. Discussion and interaction recently has included a focus on assessing school culture.

In the system leader community, administrators have focused on rural school staff development concepts and sought to make connections among district-level staff developers.



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Another learning community allows NSDC members to network with colleagues about powerful designs for professional learning. Community members are invited to share stories about their use of designs, ask questions, list resources, and discuss challenges.

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