Build a bridge to implementation with data

Last summer I asked some teams I was working with to reflect on their learning about professional development by identifying any pre-conceptions that they had come to realize were inaccurate. One team's misconception was that merely developing new **knowledge** about classroom practice was sufficient for changes in classroom practice. They had learned that long-term support and sustained assistance were critical for strong implementation.

Ed Tobia and Shirley Hord have identified six strategies required for successful change initiatives. These strategies include ways to support educators as they make the giant leap between the initiation of a new program and high-quality use of new practices, just as the school team above was preparing to do. Checking progress and continuing to give assistance are two strategies that support implementation (Tobia & Hord, 2001). District and school leaders cannot expect teachers to use new practices without some outside assistance and support.

One of the ways that central office staff can monitor progress is to **collect staff data about their current levels of use of new strategies as well as their concerns about implementation of innovations** (Roy & Hord, 2003, p. 130). These data are used when **designing district professional development experiences** to solve the problems connected with implementation or address other barriers to using new strategies. One simple strategy for central office staff: Ask educators to write a few sentences in answer to the question, "When you think about (*name of innovation),* what concerns do you have?" These responses can be categorized according to the Stages of Concern (Hall & Hord, 2001). A list of interventions helps align professional development activities with those concerns.

For example, teacher concerns might center on management. Professional learning might include setting up classroom observations between experienced and novice users, using an innovation configuration to clarify the steps of components of the new practice, conducting problem-solving protocols in which teams of teachers focus on specific management issues, or providing classroom-based video vignettes along with analysis of steps and management techniques (Hord, Rutherford, Huling, & Hall, 2006). Hord and her colleagues (2006) have outlined another way to collect information about teacher concerns through a 35-question survey that can be graphed into a visual profile of priority concerns. A teacher's use of an innovation can also be identified through a multi-level interview process.

Checking for progress is a formative evaluation strategy. Central office staff need to share the results of such data collection efforts and use them to provide ongoing support for new practices. A commitment to this approach precludes relying on a pre-arranged workshop series for all staff — *it's February and we're addressing problem-based learning whether you're ready or not* — in favor of ongoing learning based on teacher needs. Central office staff can build the bridge that helps educators make the giant leap from non-use of new practices to high-quality use of new classroom practices.

NSDC STANDARD

Data-Driven: Staff development that improves the learning of all students uses disaggregated student data to determine adult learning priorities, monitor progress, and help sustain continuous improvement.

Learn more about NSDC's standards: www.nsdc.org/standards/index.cfm.

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