

ADDRESSING CONCERNS ABOUT CHANGE

In the 1970s, education researchers inspired a fundamental shift in how educators perceive the effect a change initiative will have on those in schools. The Concerns-Based Adoption Model outlines seven stages of concern as a way to understand educators' common concerns about change. The same researchers proposed strategies school leaders could use to support educators progressing through a change initiative.



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

STAGE 0: Awareness concerns

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

- 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

Interested in some information about the change.

- 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

Wants to know the personal impact of the change.

- 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

Concerned about how the change will be managed in practice.

- 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

Interested in the impact on students or the school.

- 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

Interested in working with colleagues to make the change effective.

- 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

Begins refining the innovation to improve student learning results.

- 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. Alexandria, VA: ASCD, 1987.