

# The emperor has no clothes

Spotlight standard: Implementation

*Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students applies research on change and sustains support for implementation of professional learning for long-term change.*

## THE *Story*

A week before Douglass Middle School was scheduled to receive the state report of student achievement scores, the principal and assistant principal were nervous. The last state report had not been good. Mathematics, science, and social studies scores across 6th through 8th grades had been barely satisfactory.

The two had dissected the data with the school's 40 teachers and had asked the staff to meet in their learning teams to consider explanations for the low scores. Teams then took their hypotheses and evidence to the whole staff.

Both the principal and assistant principal had been working on their doctoral programs for two years at the nearby university. They had shared an online course the prior spring and had extensive conversations — and debate — about some of the course topics. One topic on which they wholeheartedly agreed was the need for this middle school's mostly African-American student population to gain expertise in critical thinking, problem solving, and creativity. In light of the student achievement results,

the two felt even more pressure to address the issues, but where should they start?

Principal Franklin Lee said he wished the school could offer science courses with an inquiry approach, in which students would be responsible for initiating and designing their learning by defining the problems they would set out to resolve. Almost simultaneously, Assistant Principal Alyshandra Borton wondered whether a constructivist approach in math would provide students with more opportunities to creatively solve problems.

Although their district operated with a districtwide curriculum, the area superintendent and curriculum staff had trusted and supported these school leaders in the past when they had presented good ideas. The two agreed to consult the math coordinator, science supervisor, and their area superintendent for ideas about what they might do.

Their central office colleagues enthusiastically helped them think about how to address academic goals in math, science, and social studies — and process goals of critical thinking, problem solving, and increasing creativity. The director of curriculum and instruction assured the two principals that they would have additional support for their pilot efforts: The district's math and science coordinators would meet with them every two weeks to support their efforts; a leadership coach would be available to discuss issues and concerns about the experience and to guide the school leaders in their work with staff; and instructional coaches might be assigned to support teachers' efforts to learn to implement the new

### **About the district**

This large school system is in a small northeastern state about 30 miles from the Atlantic coastline. The district's four high schools and their feeder schools are organized into divisions, each with an area superintendent and a central office. Douglass Middle School's area includes an alternative high school in the northernmost section.

practices. The central administrators also reminded the principals that the district was promoting the constructivist approach in math and inquiry in science. Borton and Lee were pleased to learn that their efforts were aligned with the district's priorities.

The school's staff spent an intense year focused on improving teaching to promote student critical thinking and problem solving. Every two weeks, the district math coordinator worked with the math teachers on a constructivist approach. The district's science supervisor worked with science teachers on an inquiry approach. These two curriculum specialists also met with the whole faculty every other month to share what the math and science departments were doing and to help teachers coordinate critical thinking and problem solving skills across subjects. The entire staff attended the meetings, and all were enthusiastic. Each hoped for significant improvement in student achievement.

### Disappointment

When the teachers gathered and unrolled the latest test scores, their disappointment was keen. "We all worked hard," Lee consoled them, "but we know it takes more than one year for good results to develop. Maybe we're missing something, though. Could each department meet to examine possible reasons, then have a conversation with us to share your findings?"

On Friday afternoon, Lee and Borton spent hours analyzing what they had learned from the departments. Finally Lee summarized: "What we hoped would happen for students regarding math, science, critical thinking, and problem solving simply hasn't occurred." Borton added, "As the little boy in the fairy tale said, 'The emperor has no clothes!'"

"We need some help examining our findings and understanding why our change effort is not succeeding," Lee said. The administrators decided to reach out to their area superintendent,

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Jim Nelson. Lee dialed the area superintendent, who he knew had experience facilitating successful improvement efforts. Nelson wasn't surprised to hear from Lee. He had studied the student data before the schools received their reports and was aware of the school's efforts and the student test scores.

"How about meeting for dinner before the Friday night ball game?" Nelson asked.

### **The superintendent steps in**

At the restaurant, Nelson offered condolences. Then he reminded the school administrators that substantive changes in curriculum or instruction require three or more years to learn and translate into practice (Fullan, 2001).

"You had solid research to support the changes to your curriculum," he said. "I wonder how effective your teachers are in using the new practices."

Nelson introduced them to a metaphor of an "implementation bridge" to explain how a school gets from adopting new practices to seeing increased student gains (Hall & Hord, 2011).

"Getting from point *a* to point *b* doesn't happen just because we wish it or because we have devoted time to it," he said. "The distance between adopting a new way and having that change benefit students is a trek. Maybe we need to review the plans for getting teachers and students across the implementation bridge."

He outlined several strategies he had gleaned from research and previous experience:

- Articulate a shared vision of the new way — what it will look like when it has been installed in the classroom with a high degree of fidelity.
- Create a plan and identify resources that enable us to attain the vision.
- Invest in professional learning about what the new way is and how to use it.
- Assess the degree to which staff are moving across the bridge and attaining the vision.

- Provide assistance one-to-one or to small groups to support movement.
- Create a context that supports and encourages the change. (Tobia & Hord, 2002)

“So we should address the issue of shared vision first,” Borton said. “From the conversations we had with the school teams, I don’t think they really know what the new ways look like in the classroom. And our follow-up has been weak. Teachers admitted they went back to the ways they knew because they weren’t clear about the expectations.”

Nelson said support requires understanding individuals’ implementation. He reminded the two principals of the power of using Innovation Configuration (IC) maps (Hord, Stiegelbauer, Hall, & George, 2006) to detail the major components of a new program, process, or practice so that the implementer knows what the innovation is and what it looks like in operation. The map addresses the task in the first strategy, a shared vision, spells out the ideal practices of the innovation in operation, and describes what an observer would see when the innovation is implemented.

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“The IC also provides a foundation for other strategies,” Nelson said. “When a vision is committed to paper, we can use the vision to create a plan to identify human and material resources we need. A part of the plan will be the third strategy: providing effective professional learning about the innovation and how to use it in the classroom. And the IC map informs the professional learning — describes what the administrators and teachers will need to learn to do.”

He described a study of an American school in Germany implementing change. The study (Schaal, 2010) found that teachers who adhered most closely to the IC map of the new math approach and who had the highest rating on Levels of Use (Hall, Dirksen, & George, 2006) had the highest student scores on mathematics.



## ■ Apply change research

Effective professional learning begins with clear goals and high expectations for implementing the change with fidelity. Those responsible for professional learning apply research on change to respond to the differences they will encounter in facilitating individual and organizational improvement. Change research offers valuable guidance and resources for supporting and sustaining implementation efforts. Change agents around the globe have used research-based tools — Stages of Concern and Levels of Use — to support change efforts (Hall & Hord, 2011).

**Stages of Concern.** Stages of Concern describes the affective, or personal, dimension of any change, whether a school, classroom, or personal change. The measure outlines seven stages and describes the reactions, attitudes, or perspectives of an individual at each stage related to a specific change. Leaders who identify an individual's stage of concern can offer appropriate learning and support.

**Levels of Use.** Levels of Use were identified from research on change and reveal eight behaviors that individuals demonstrate as they approach change. Knowing an individual's Level of Use can help leaders identify the supports most likely to lead to the person putting the change into practice.

**Innovation Configurations.** Innovation Configurations detail the major components of a new program, process, or practice so that the implementer knows what the innovation is and what it looks like in operation (Hord, Stiegelbauer, Hall, & George, 2006). The map spells out the ideal practices of the innovation in operation and describes what an observer would see when the innovation is implemented.

## ■ Sustain implementation

Nearly any change effort requires three to five years for quality implementation (Fullan, 2001). Continued support, through providing time and a budget that includes sufficient materials,

is vital in order to sustain the new program, process, or practice. Learning sessions that deepen participants' understanding of the new practice are also necessary to implement and sustain the change.

Job-embedded support is among the most essential sources of support for successful implementation. This may include coaching, reflecting, problem solving, data analysis, and intentional learning. Support may occur individually, with a partner, with a learning team, with an entire faculty, or with a group beyond the school. Some support may occur face-to-face or online. The key is that the support is available when it is needed most and that the process is not abandoned when the individuals hit the inevitable implementation dip of change efforts (Fullan, 2001).

### ■ Provide constructive feedback

*Scheduling time to examine data and share feedback, tutor, and encourage individuals to reflect on their use of the new practice is at the heart of this big idea.*

Providing data that answer questions about implementation and impact is key to achieving program goals. Change leaders collect and analyze data in order to identify those who need help. Multiple forms of data can be accessed to indicate levels of implementation, problems of implementation, individual understanding, application, student progress, and more. Change facilitators use formative assessment data to share useful and meaningful feedback with implementers to help them identify areas in need of improvement. Scheduling time to examine data and share feedback, tutor, and encourage individuals to reflect on their use of the new practice is at the heart of this big idea.

Feedback should come from multiple sources and in multiple forms. Change leaders — facilitators, coaches, or assistants — introduce practitioners to self-assessment tools. They often work with implementers to find solutions and solicit the individual's agreement to try a solution. They return to assess impact and determine next steps toward successful implementation.

CONNECTING  
TO THE *Standards*



Successful **implementation** of an initiative is challenging. Transferring a new program to the classroom typically requires several years of focused work. Part of the basic work of implementation is clearly specifying in writing or through an assessment instrument what the practice will look like in the school or classroom when it is implemented well. Many change leaders and school improvement teams find the Innovation Configuration concept and its written map valuable for this purpose.

The Innovation Configuration map defines the best practices or ideal uses of the innovation. The map makes clear that learning about the innovation and how to use it requires time. The continuum of practice outlined on the map identifies decreasing iterations of the ideal; it defines the goal or target and various progressions along the way to the goal.

As previous chapters have shown, no standard can stand alone. District leaders must depend on **data** to determine which programs or practices to eliminate and replace. Educators will need to learn what the new program is and how to use it through **learning community** activities where a variety of **learning designs** help them deepen their knowledge and build the skills they need to implement the initiative with a high degree of fidelity. Leaders then continue to collect and interpret data to check the progress of implementation.

**Leadership** is essential to successfully implementing change. Assuming that change is a free ride — that a new curriculum or new way of teaching, a new assessment, evaluation, or any aspect of change will be easy — is a mistake. Change leaders will need to pay attention to and arrange for **resources** such as time, learning materials, and human resources. Change supporters must articulate the **outcomes** they expect from adopting and implementing the new program. It's impossible for implementers to reach a desired outcome if the outcome

has not been specified in advance. The lack of clearly defined outcomes may be responsible for the lack of success in many change efforts.

### **What do you think?**

Douglass Middle School has committed to improving teaching, expecting as a result to improve student learning. The school benefits from its administrators' attention to teacher and student needs, as well as the area superintendent's and middle school principals' commitment to their own learning about leadership and change. The principal and assistant principal have worked to involve staff in conversations about improvement efforts, increasing the possibility of gaining and confirming teachers' commitment to continued improvement. However, the school's change effort has now stalled.

- The area superintendent shares with the principals that he will recommend professional learning as the focus for future principal meetings. How might that experience help Borton and Lee?
- What can the area superintendent do to increase the principals' knowledge and skills to be able to change teachers' practice and increase student learning?
- What other actions might the principals take to support and facilitate the teachers' implementation of the new strategies?
- What structures and/or processes might the principals put in place to sustain the teachers' implementation of the new program?
- How can the school leaders assess how well teachers are implementing the program, an important factor in providing teachers with feedback and support?
- What can the school system do to ensure that teacher feedback is offered with appropriate sensitivity and skill?
- What experiences have you had, or what books and articles have you read, that have implications for this district and its schools?

## ANALYSIS & *Advice*

THE AUTHORS' RECOMMENDATIONS ARE SUGGESTIONS — ONE POSSIBLE SCENARIO. READERS WILL HAVE MANY VALUABLE IDEAS.

Peter Block (1987, p. 98) states, “Leadership is the process of translating intentions into reality.” Leaders must do more than manage schools and districts well so that a stable environment exists; they must act as teachers, spurring educators to action and improvement. In essence, leaders are change-makers, guiding their organizations to an improved status. In Douglass Middle School’s case, we might create posters of Block’s statement and post them in the superintendent’s and principals’ offices. Translating lofty goals into everyday practice is part of the leader’s role. This is the focus of our advice.

The area superintendent and middle school principals value continuous professional learning, but it is unclear how the professional learning that is being offered is engaging the classroom teachers. Given the lack of clear understanding about what the new program should look like in classrooms, leaders could begin by answering: What will teachers be doing when they are practicing the new way of teaching? They also might specify student outcomes that should result from teachers’ actions. Identifying teachers’ instructional practices and student results is the base from which the change can proceed successfully. Without this vision of the change, the process is doomed.

Administrators and teachers will benefit from keeping in mind a cycle of continuous improvement that reaffirms ideas about school improvement and change.

- School improvement begins when educators collect an array of student performance data and analyze the data to ascertain in which areas students are learning successfully and in which areas they are not.

- When areas are identified where students aren't succeeding, educators eliminate practices that did not result in student success and select programs, practices, strategies, or processes that may help educators serve students more successfully.
- Adopting and introducing an innovation — and expecting results — without specifying desired outcomes is like giving a novice chef a package of ingredients without a recipe and expecting to be served an elaborate dessert.
- School improvement requires eliminating unsuccessful practices and presenting a clear articulation or picture of potentially successful ones, along with attention and activities that support educators' learning about the new practice and how to use it.

*Change is learning, and learning produces change.*

School improvement is based on changing school and classroom practice, and changing practice is based on learning the new practice.

To put it succinctly: Change is learning, and learning produces change.

The leaders in this story might identify strategies and tools in the change research (see the first big idea) to understand exactly what their new program entails. Their review might remind them about the superintendent's reference to IC maps and should lead them to consider bringing together teacher representatives and an expert who clearly understands the new program to construct an IC map. The group could create several maps that will:

1. Define what teachers will do in the new program.
2. Describe the principal's and assistant principal's roles and actions.
3. Indicate what students will be doing when they are engaged with the program.

They could make separate maps for each of these role groups so that roles do not become jumbled on one map.

Next, the administrators might use the maps to determine what resources they will need in order for teachers to take a new,

constructivist approach to mathematics that will support developing students' skills in critical thinking, creativity, and problem solving. Effective professional learning providers, such as this area superintendent and principals, can use the maps as a guide to identify what the teachers and principals need to learn in order to know what and how to use the program.

The IC map is constructed along a continuum describing a progression of desired behavior and the ideal variation of each outcome. The map spells out in detail *what* the new program is and what the *expectations* are for *how* it will be used.

In a third step, the area superintendent and principals can use the maps to monitor individuals' progress in learning about and using the program. These change leaders can then use the IC maps to share constructive feedback with each teacher implementing the change about his or her performance so that, collectively, they can determine what support and assistance the individual may need (see the third big idea on providing constructive feedback). The goal is fidelity — using the new program or practice in the highest-quality way. The IC map is a growth-inducing tool, indicating where implementers are on the continuum toward ideal and where they need help to advance their learning and performance.

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in the highest-quality way.*

Finally, the change-leading area superintendent and principals can identify individuals who can facilitate the teachers' implementation of the change and use the maps to prepare the selected facilitators to guide and support individuals' understanding of how to use the new way. Change leaders and the facilitators may use the maps to assess progress every other week or so, observing implementers or talking with them about their progress. Leaders (the system and school-based administrators and those facilitating the classroom teachers) continually use the maps to guide the process (see the big idea on sustaining implementation).

Each of these steps requires a significant investment of time. Making maps requires thoughtful analysis and clear writing to enable others to use this tool. Writing a good first draft may require a couple of days, but revisions may take several more days. The second step, using the maps to plan implementation and resources, may be done in a day or so if planners are familiar with the new practices and their requirements through having created and reviewed the maps. In most cases, implementation requires three to five years. Leaders continuously use the maps to guide the process.

The administrators in this school, supported by their central office colleagues, might need to regularly remind students, teachers, and parents of the new program's purpose, value, and benefits to students. They have identified others to learn, work, and cooperate with them in activities supporting the teachers and students in the change. They will need to continue to encourage teachers, students, and parents to take ownership in the process of making this change successful. Ultimately, they will celebrate increased staff and student learning.

CHAPTER 6

*Activities*



IMPLEMENTATION



## Activity 6.1: Reviewing the standard

### OUTCOME

Participants will share new understandings of the standard in practice.

### OVERVIEW

Participants review the three big ideas of the Implementation standard and then consider their application in light of a case study focusing on implementation of professional learning. Participants consider actions associated with successful implementation of the standard.

### MATERIALS

- A copy of Chapter 6 for each participant.
- A copy of the Implementation standard rationale, available at [www.learningforward.org/standards/implementation/index.cfm](http://www.learningforward.org/standards/implementation/index.cfm), for each participant.
- A copy of **Tool 6.1: Supporting Implementation** for each participant.

### OPTIONAL MATERIALS

- Video vignette, available at [www.learningforward.org/standards/implementation/index.cfm#Video](http://www.learningforward.org/standards/implementation/index.cfm#Video).
- “Learning builds the bridge between research and practice,” by Gene E. Hall and Shirley M. Hord. *JSD*, August 2011, Vol. 32, No. 4, pp. 52-57.

### TIME

45 minutes to 1 hour.

### LEARNING STRUCTURE

Groups of two to three to promote active engagement.

Activity 6.1 directions		Time
1.	Read the Implementation standard to the group or post it where all can see: <i>Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students applies research on change and sustains support for implementation of professional learning for long-term change.</i>	1 minute
2.	Read the Implementation standard rationale.	4 minutes
3.	Have groups complete the key ideas column in <b>Tool 6.1: Supporting Implementation.</b>	5 minutes
4.	Review the case study in Chapter 6. Consider strengths and weaknesses associated with the standard’s three big ideas. Complete the strengths and weaknesses columns in <b>Tool 6.1.</b>	15 minutes
5.	<b>(Optional.)</b> Assign each group one big idea. Ask each group to discuss the idea and then to share findings with the large group.	15 minutes
6.	In small groups, discuss these questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What evidence suggests that the school will improve student achievement in math, science, and social studies?</li> <li>• What does the school need to pay attention to in order to promote deeper implementation?</li> <li>• What are three next steps you would advise the school to consider?</li> </ul>	15 minutes
7.	Invite groups to share their new understanding of this standard.	5 minutes

## Tool 6.1: Supporting implementation

### Implementation standard

*Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students applies research on change and sustains support for implementation of professional learning for long-term change.*

Component	Key ideas	Strengths	Weaknesses
Apply change research.			
Sustain implementation.			
Provide constructive feedback.			

## Activity 6.2: Going deeper

### OUTCOME

Participants will report new learning associated with a deeper understanding of the Implementation standard and the research that undergirds it.

### OVERVIEW

Participants review additional resources related to the Implementation standard to build a deeper understanding of it. They share their findings using a jigsaw tool. Finally, they transfer their new understanding to a current implementation challenge.

### MATERIALS

- A copy of Chapter 6 for each participant.
- A copy of **Tool 6.2: Change Jigsaw** for each participant.
- Copies of four of the following (one per person):
  - Implementation standard rationale, available at [www.learningforward.org/standards/implementation/index.cfm](http://www.learningforward.org/standards/implementation/index.cfm).
  - "Research-based tool gauges actual use of a new approach," by Robby Champion, available at [www.learningforward.org/news/getDocument.cfm?articleID=514](http://www.learningforward.org/news/getDocument.cfm?articleID=514).
  - "What concerns do you have?" by Patricia Roy, available at [www.learningforward.org/news/getDocument.cfm?articleID=1743](http://www.learningforward.org/news/getDocument.cfm?articleID=1743).
  - "Navigating the fluctuating undercurrents of change," by Patricia Roy, available at [www.learningforward.org/news/getDocument.cfm?articleID=1739](http://www.learningforward.org/news/getDocument.cfm?articleID=1739).
  - "Extreme makeover: Needs assessment edition," by Patricia Roy, available at [www.learningforward.org/news/getDocument.cfm?articleID=1624](http://www.learningforward.org/news/getDocument.cfm?articleID=1624).
  - "Learning builds the bridge between research and practice," by Gene E. Hall and Shirley M. Hord. *JSD*, August 2011, Vol. 32, No. 4, pp. 52-57.

### TIME

45 minutes.

### LEARNING STRUCTURE

Groups of three to four to promote active engagement.

<b>Activity 6.2 directions</b>		<b>Time</b>
<b>1.</b>	Ask participants to discuss their thoughts on why the Implementation standard was not in the last two editions of the standards.	10 minutes
<b>2.</b>	Have group members brainstorm a list of questions they would like answered regarding this standard and the research that supports it.	5 minutes
<b>3.</b>	Give each participant a copy of <b>Tool 6.2: Change Jigsaw</b> and one of the articles. Ask participants to read the article, highlighting key ideas, and record answers to the questions in the tool. Participants should determine the most important ideas to share with colleagues and discuss these with other members of the group.	20 minutes
<b>4.</b>	After participants have completed the tool, discuss the implications of the new information for a current professional development initiative.	10 minutes

## Tool 6.2: Change jigsaw

What is the focus of the article you read?
What key concepts were introduced in the article?
How did the article reinforce the standard?
Did the article offer ideas that would be helpful in addressing the case study?
Did the article offer ideas and/or tools that would be helpful in your setting? How?

## Activity 6.3: Taking action

### OUTCOME

Participants will identify appropriate actions to accelerate implementation of a current initiative.

### OVERVIEW

Participants apply six strategies of effective change implementation to a current initiative and evaluate the degree of implementation. They then commit to a next action to promote a more successful implementation.

### MATERIALS

- A copy of Chapter 6 for each participant.
- A copy of **Tool 6.3: Rating Implementation** for each participant.

### OPTIONAL MATERIALS

- Standards website: [www.learningforward.org/standards](http://www.learningforward.org/standards).
- A copy of the Implementation standard rationale available at [www.learningforward.org/standards/implementation/index.cfm](http://www.learningforward.org/standards/implementation/index.cfm).
- Video vignette, available at [www.learningforward.org/standards/implementation/index.cfm#Video](http://www.learningforward.org/standards/implementation/index.cfm#Video).
- “Learning builds the bridge between research and practice,” by Gene E. Hall and Shirley M. Hord. *JSD*, August 2011, Vol. 32, No. 4, pp. 52-57.

### TIME

70 to 80 minutes.

### LEARNING STRUCTURE

Groups of three to four to promote active engagement.

Activity 6.3 directions		Time
1.	Ask participants to identify a current professional development program or initiative in your school or organization.	1 minute
2.	Discuss how successful participants expect the initiative to be in achieving its goals and the reasons for their expectations.	4 minutes
3.	Review the six strategies of successful change efforts found within the chapter.	5 minutes
4.	Refer to <b>Tool 6.3: Rating Implementation</b> . If a number of small groups are working on the same initiative, assign each group one section to evaluate. Focus on identifying the evidence or key reasons for the ranking.	5 to 10 minutes
5.	Share the rationale for each ranking with the whole group.	10 to 15 minutes
6.	Using this information, brainstorm actions that participants can take to support more successful implementation of the initiative.	10 minutes
7.	Discuss the strengths and weaknesses associated with each recommendation.	10 minutes
8.	Narrow the list of potential actions to three.	5 minutes
9.	Write a plan to implement these actions.	15 minutes
10.	Set a date to review the success of the actions.	5 minutes

### Tool 6.3: Rating implementation

**Directions:** Rate the degree of implementation on a scale of 1 to 5 associated with each element of your initiative. Record reasons for your rating in the rating cell.

#### Our professional development initiative:

Element	Very high 5	High 4	Some 3	Limited 2	None 1
Articulates a shared vision of the new way.					
Has a plan and identifies resources to achieve the vision.					
Invests in professional learning about the new way and how to use it.					
Assesses the degree to which we are implementing our learning and using the new way to attain the vision.					
Provides for one-to-one or small group assistance to support implementation.					
Creates a context that supports and encourages the change.					