

Managing change

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Framing a problem of practice

Purpose	This tool helps principals who are members of a learning community to think deeply and in a measurable way about a specific, defined problem. The protocol has two purposes: 1) to develop participants' capacities to identify and describe the problems that are affecting conditions of teaching and learning at their schools, and 2) to help one another understand and resolve challenges associated with educator professional learning.
Recommended time	1 hour minimum; time allocation will vary throughout periods of work
Materials	<p>Tool 3.1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Brief: A Community of Learners Does Authentic Work to Improve Teaching and Learning, pages 3–4 • Problem of Practice Template, page 5 • Media for capturing notes and recording artifacts for virtual and face-to-face small-group discussions (e.g. tablets, laptops and applications, white boards, chart paper, note cards)
Process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify 3–4 colleagues (preferably other principals) to form a learning community that will work together on problems of practice. 2. Before convening or when convened, read "In Brief: A Community of Learners Does Authentic Work to Improve Teaching and Learning," page 3–4. 3. First, decide whether members of the team will complete a "Problem of Practice Template" (p. 5) for their respective schools or whether they will work collectively on a single template. Next, define and discuss the attributes and respond to the 9 questions in the box on page 4. 4. Reach consensus about the 9 questions. Then use your research and responses to complete the "Problem of Practice Template" on page 5.

Framing a problem of practice, continued

In Brief: A Community of Learners Does Authentic Work to Improve Teaching and Learning

When learning communities focus on clear problems of practice, they are more likely to achieve the goals they set for themselves.

A Community of Learners

A community of learners successfully frames a clearly articulated problem of practice so that they can collaborate in learning new skills and adopting new practices. These new practices strategically and systematically support, challenge, and develop high levels of skills, attitudes, and behaviors socially and academically in students who have not met sufficient grade-level standards in their classrooms and schools.

When members learn and work together to frame a problem of practice, the community:

- Develops a focus for their work through a clearly articulated problem of practice.
- Engages in a cycle of continuous improvement that results in their learning and increases student success.
- Supports and nurtures the learning of peers in the community and the community at large.
- Reflects continuously on what they are learning and makes shifts in their learning process if they are not seeing significant success for their students.

In a learning community of principals, members work to articulate an issue that they are struggling to resolve. As they think about the problem, they make sure it is an issue that would be resolved by professional learning. For example, here is an example of a problem statement: “Math scores in my school have been low for all students for several years. We have purchased new materials; we have given teaching teams sample lessons, but nothing is really making a difference.”

This problem certainly could be resolved through professional learning. A problem with the movement of cars through the parking lot, on the other hand, might be resolved through professional learning for parents, but that might not be the most efficient or effective response.

As teams work on framing problems of practice, they develop their shared understanding of what constitute “Defining a Quality Problem of Practice.” Practice. In your team or individually, review the following e.”

Framing a problem of practice, continued

In Brief: A Community of Learners Does Authentic Work to Improve Teaching and Learning, continued

Defining a Quality Problem of Practice

A high-quality problem of practice is one that surfaces from unresolved issues in student and/or staff performance that need study and a new solution.

A rigorous problem of practice requires:

- A laser-like focus on a strategic issue that has become a barrier both to student achievement of standards and concepts expected at grade level and to teaching team and principal success in helping students grasp those standards and concepts.
- Clear analysis of the current conditions that have led to the problem.
- Definition and establishment of, as well as commitment to, new, rigorous goals and systems to achieve them.
- Alignment of these goals with district strategies for improvement:
 1. It is actionable within the time frame.
 2. It is directly observable.
 3. It is stated in no more than a few sentences.

EXAMPLE: We believe that we, as principals who are leaders of student and staff learning in our schools, have a valuable and essential role in supporting struggling students and in keeping them on grade level. The student performance results are frustrating teams of teachers and principals. How do we enable all ourselves as principals to continuously and dramatically improve our practice, engage in a community of learners with each other, focus staff work on student mastery of student expectations, and enhance all our impact on student learning?

DEFINING A QUALITY PROBLEM OF PRACTICE.

Use a discussion of these questions to inform future decisions regarding problems of practice:

1. What is the current situation that we intend to impact through our problem of practice?
2. What is a rigorous, challenging goal (or goals) that we expect to resolve the issue?
3. What will it look like when we achieve the desired goal(s)?
4. What do we want to do to achieve that?
5. What behaviors need to change for us to achieve our goal?
6. How would we differentiate our work to meet the different learning needs?
7. How will we monitor our progress and follow-through to ensure high levels of proficiency?
8. How will we measure our effectiveness?
9. What commitments are we making to ourselves?

Framing a problem of practice, continued

Problem of Practice Template

Problem of practice:			
Goal: By the end of the school year, all staff effectively . . .			
What is the current situation we intend to impact through our problem of practice?	What, if anything, has already been tried to resolve this problem? What has been working? How do you know?		
	Why hasn't the problem been resolved? How do you know?		
What would success look like for the problem to be solved?			
How would we monitor progress and follow through to ensure success?			

List 3-4 things you would like to try that might solve the problem			
Solution Possibility	Why do you think this might work?	What behaviors need to change in order to achieve our goal?	How would we differentiate our work to meet different learning needs?

Developing a theory of change

Purpose	Theory of Change protocols support the development of thoughtful plans to address challenges or opportunities. This tool can be used by the Principal Learning Community that worked together on Tool 3.1 or with other leadership, grade-level, and subject matter teams.
Recommended time	1 hour minimum. Time allocation will vary throughout implementation.
Materials	<p>Tool 3.2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions to Guide Development of a Theory of Change, page 7 • Media for capturing notes and recording artifacts for virtual and face-to-face small-group discussions (e.g. tablets, laptops and applications, white boards, chart paper, note cards)
Process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. State the team's expectations: Team members will establish a theory of change to achieve the goals they have set as an organization. Team members will develop a clear theory of change before making decisions about the actions they will take to achieve their goals. 2. Explain that a theory of change helps to clarify all building blocks required to achieve a long-term goal. This set of connected building blocks establishes a path to success. 3. Ask participants to work individually or in small teams to answer each of the seven questions on page 7. Note: If team members require additional research before the questions can be answered effectively, ask them to conduct their research and come prepared to share. 4. Consider the questions one at a time. Once each participant has answered the first question, ask each small team to come to agreement. 5. Ask each team to share results with the whole group. 6. Find common ideas and come to consensus as a whole group. 7. Then answer the second question in the same way and proceed until all questions are answered. 8. Ask each team member to reflect on his or her work, share it with the larger community, and make revisions in the answers based on the best thinking of everyone. 9. Use the theory of change to establish a clearly articulated plan of action. 10. Implement the plan and reflect on the progress regularly.

Developing a theory of change, continued

Questions to Guide Development of a Theory of Change

Answer each question individually, then work as a team to come to consensus about the answers:

1. What is the current situation that we intend to impact?
2. What will it look like when we achieve the desired results we set for ourselves earlier today?
3. What do we need to do to achieve that?
4. What behaviors need to change for that outcome to be achieved?
5. What knowledge or skills do people need before the behavior will change?
6. What resources will be needed to achieve our results?
7. How will we know we are achieving the goals that we have set for ourselves?

Source: Reprinted from "Protocol for Establishing a Theory of Change," in *Journal of Staff Development*, 35(5), pp. 22; 24. Copyright 2014 Learning Forward.

Writing a logic model

Purpose	Developing a logic model enables a school leader to clearly articulate first- and second-order change in terms of time, outcomes, and essential resources.
Recommended time	1–2 hours minimum
Materials	<p>Tool 3.3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responses to “theory of change questions” from Chapter 3, pages 34–40, of <i>The Learning Principal</i> • SMART goals for what is to be accomplished • Logic Model Sample, page 9 • Logic Model Template, pages 10–11
Process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read the following introduction: <p>After setting SMART goals, a logic model provides a structure to make explicit the ways in which those goals will be attained. It is a good tool for planning activities and measuring progress. A solid logic model is an action plan that identifies increments of change over time. There are many types of logic models. The model in this tool includes six components: inputs; activities; outputs; and short-, intermediate, and long-term outcomes.</p> <p>A logic model (also referred to as theory of action) includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A well-specified conceptual framework that identifies key components of the proposed process, activities, strategy, or practice. • The active “ingredients” or inputs that are hypothesized to be critical to achieving the relevant outcomes. • A description of the relationships among the key components and outcomes. 2. Review your answers to the seven “theory of change questions” (see <i>The Learning Principal</i>, Chapter 3, pages 34–40). 3. Reflect on your answers and your SMART goals. Remember: SMART goals are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time bound. (See sample on page 9.) 4. Complete Logic Model Template on pages 10–11. (See examples on page 11.)

Writing a logic model, continued

Logic Model Sample

SMART Goal:					
Eighty percent of 6th-grade students will demonstrate proficiency in the statewide mathematics assessments at the end of this calendar year. Next year, 85% will demonstrate proficiency.					
			Formative evaluation		Summative evaluation
Input	Activities	Output	Short-term outcome	Intermediate outcome	Long-term outcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demographic data • Course and assessment data in mathematics • Student work samples • Teacher classroom observation data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers engage in a series of professional learning experiences aligned to newly adopted mathematics curriculum and instructional materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers deepen content knowledge and understanding of new mathematics resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers begin to employ new instructional strategies (as evidenced by coaches' reports and principal observations) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student work shows a deeper understanding of mathematical concepts • Students show across the board improvements in formative assessments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statewide summative assessment gains meet established goals

Writing a logic model, continued

Logic Model Template

See examples on page 11.

SMART Goal:					
			Formative evaluation		Summative evaluation
Input	Activities	Output	Short-term outcome	Intermediate outcome	Long-term outcome
What resources and data inform decisions regarding an innovation, program, or strategy?	What activities are required for the innovation, program, or strategy?	What are measurable results of each activity?	What short-term changes, or outcomes, result from the innovation, program, or strategy?	What intermediate changes, or outcomes, result from the innovation, program, or strategy?	What long-term changes, or outcomes, result from the innovation, program, or strategy?

Writing a logic model, continued

Logic Model Template, continued

Examples

Input	Activities	Output	Short-term outcome	Intermediate outcome	Long-term outcome
Examples include:					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student-level data (e.g. demographic data, assessment data, postsecondary data) • Parent/Family data (e.g. expectations, level of education) • School-level data (e.g. free-and-reduced-lunch status, college-going culture, AP courses) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student activities (e.g. engaging in online learning experience facilitated by teachers) • Teacher actions (e.g. visiting colleagues classrooms and sharing best practice strategies) • Schoolwide activities (e.g. adoption and implementation of alternative discipline program) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of students and families served • Number of professional learning experiences facilitated • Number of classrooms visited 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased teacher knowledge of a new instructional strategy • Principals' deeper understanding of a coaching technique • Students' and parents' knowledge of districtwide discipline plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased pre-Algebra enrollment • Increased attendance • Decrease in office referrals for discipline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased academic performance • Increased graduation rates • Decrease in suspensions and expulsions

Using the Concerns-Based Adoption Model and Stages of Concern

Purpose	Use the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) and one of the diagnostic dimensions, the Stages of Concern (SoC), to plan and provide differentiated support to staff who are engaging in a change process.
Recommended time	1–2 hours minimum
Materials	Tool 3.4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “A Measure of Concern: Research-based Program Aids Innovation by Addressing Teacher Concerns,” by K. Holloway,” pages 13–18 • Stages of Concern (SoC) table, pages 19–26
Process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read “A Measure of Concern” on pages 13–15. 2. Identify one or two major change initiatives underway. Keep those in mind as you complete the SoC table on pages 16–22.

Using the Concerns-Based Adoption Model and Stages of Concern, continued

A measure of concern

*Research-based program aids innovation
by addressing teacher concerns*

By Karel Holloway

What happens when programs intended to improve student learning aren't successful? Staff carefully researches potential programs, hand-selects one to address the specific needs of the students, and thoroughly prepares teachers. But, once implemented, the innovation doesn't produce the desired results.

Often, researchers say, the problem is not the program, but the way individual educators respond to it.

Each administrator, each principal, each teacher approaches a new program, any change, with a personal set of concerns, researchers have found. Individuals question: *Why should I do this? How long is it going to take me to work through this? I know my kids and I don't think this will work.* Helping educators work through these concerns is crucial in making certain that changes happen.

Just as there are research-based educational innovations, there is a research-based program for aiding innovation — the Concerns-Based Adoption Model or CBAM. It offers a way to understand, then address educators' common concerns about change.

CBAM has other components but the most readily and commonly used is "stages of concern." The ideas were developed in the mid 1970s and many staff developers have integrated the concepts into their work over the past 25 years.

"I run into people all the time who have heard of the stages of concern and kind of keep them in the back of their minds," said Shirley Hord, program manager with the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory. She is one of the principal authors of the system.



Hord said the program is helpful because it is based on research. "We didn't just think this up," Hord said. Through questioning and correlating answers from teachers and college professors about change, Hord and her colleagues identified

common concerns that most educators – or any group confronted with change – harbor. Some will go through all the stages, leaving one and moving up to the next. Most will skip around and may have several concerns simultaneously, Hord said.

CBAM's seven stages of concern are:

- **Awareness:** Aware that an innovation is being introduced but not really interested or con-

Continued

Using the Concerns-Based Adoption Model and Stages of Concern, continued

A Measure of Concern, continued

Program addresses teacher concerns

Continued

cerned with it.

- **Informational:** Interested in some information about the change.
- **Personal:** Wants to know the personal impact of the change.
- **Management:** Concerned about how the change will be managed in practice.
- **Consequence:** Interested in the impact on students or the school.
- **Collaboration:** Interested in working with colleagues to make the change effective.
- **Refocusing:** Begins refining the innovation to improve student learning results.

Being aware of the concerns allows those in charge of the innovation to tailor aid given to individuals.

“Using the stages of concern, you can get a whole profile,” said Gene Hall, one of the CBAM researchers and dean of the college of education at the University of Nevada at Las Vegas. For example, if a leader knows a teacher is concerned about how the innovation will be used in the classroom, that teacher can be given additional preparation or paired with a teacher who is using it well.

ASKING QUESTIONS

Determining a person’s stage of concern can be as simple as asking questions, Hord said. Educators can be asked informally during a chance meeting in the hall or in the lunchroom, something Hord calls a “one-legged interview.” Or teachers can be asked to respond to open-ended questions as part of the original training. For those interested in building statistical data, teachers can be asked to fill out a survey developed by university researchers. That method is best used only by those who have received training and have a particular need for the data, Hord said.

For most, the informal questions of Hord’s “one-legged interview” are the most productive. The questions should be fairly specific: How are your students managing the new math manipulatives?

If a teacher answers, “I haven’t really had a chance to use those,” the teacher is at the first stage, awareness, not really concerned about the innovation.

A teacher who answers “Mary Jo and I have been working on some ways to let the students use them more for discovery” has reached the collaborative stage.

Teachers can then get the follow-up support for their stages. The first teacher may need retraining to get more information and be impressed with how important the innovation is. The second teacher needs to be encouraged to continue and expand the collaboration.

OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

A more formal way to assess an individual’s stage of concern involves asking teachers to respond to an open-ended question. The question can be asked at the beginning of training, the end, or both. Before and after training, teachers can be asked a question such as “What concerns you about the new program?”

If asked before and after, facilitators can see where teachers started and how much movement has occurred. Similarly, when asked at the end, responses indicate what type of follow-up is needed with specific teachers.

USING A QUESTIONNAIRE

Sister Karen Dietrich, principal of the Mt. Saint Joseph Academy near Philadelphia, has used the questionnaire developed by Hord, Hall and their associates and said bar graphs of teacher responses provide comforting proof that technology use is taking hold in her school.

After a technology institute last summer, teachers were asked to fill out a 35-statement survey. Dietrich and a technology facilitator used the results from the 24 responses to address their concerns individually. The teachers filled out the survey again and there was clear movement, Dietrich said.

“When I look at my first 24 bar graphs, there is real density in self concern. In De-

cerner, that has clearly spread out. What is so significant is that in eight weeks, there has been clear movement,” she said.

The survey and later personal interviews revealed some real surprises, she said. A teacher who had already been using technology to arrange video conferences with a school in England had responses that showed her concerns were at the bottom stages of awareness and informational. “She had the skills, she just needed the confidence,” Dietrich said.

Dietrich used the formal survey and is working out statistical data because her results are part of her doctoral dissertation. But she said the informal interviews have been key. Each interview lasts five to 30 minutes. Some of the exchanges have been by e-mail.

Quickly addressing the concern following an interview was important as well, she said. A teacher who can’t figure out how to do something may abandon most technology use if not given aid. “They weren’t left hanging for weeks or months,” she said. While Dietrich has done much of the evaluation and follow-up, she has had help. The school hired a teacher technologist and Dietrich said she sends some responses to her. Other teachers have been referred to other teachers. “We have a culture of teachers helping teachers,” she said.

Finding the time to use CBAM has not always been easy, she said. With a limited budget, hiring the technologist took careful planning. And teachers asked to work with other teachers must get the free time to provide help.

CBAM isn’t fast but it provides the ongoing, steady support needed to move an innovation forward, she said.

Dietrich said she felt that using the method to assess how the technological innovations were going was a necessity. “We’ve invested in the technology. If we are going to invest \$50,000, \$60,000, or \$70,000 in new computers and mobile technology, I can’t let it go to waste and be covered with dust.”

Using the Concerns-Based Adoption Model and Stages of Concern, continued

A Measure of Concern, continued

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."

"Everyone

thinks of

changing the

world, but no

one thinks of

changing

himself."

— Leo Tolstoy

Using the Concerns-Based Adoption Model and Stages of Concern, continued

Stages of Concern (SoC) Table, continued

Stage 0	Unconcerned (Awareness)*
<p>Teachers and others are aware that an innovation is being introduced, but they are unconcerned about it. Typical responses include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm not really concerned about this innovation. • I don't really care what this innovation involves. 	
<p>Strategies leaders might employ:</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 there are no foolish questions. 	
<p>My strategies:</p>	
<p>1.</p>	
<p>2.</p>	
<p>3.</p>	

*"Unconcerned" is the term used in the CBAM. "Awareness" is the term K. Holloway uses in her interview with Shirley Hord

Using the Concerns-Based Adoption Model and Stages of Concern, continued

Stages of Concern (SoC) Table, continued

Stage 1	Informational
<p>Teachers and others are interested in some information about the change. Typical responses include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	
<p>Strategies leaders might employ:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	
<p>My strategies:</p>	
<p>1.</p>	
<p>2.</p>	
<p>3.</p>	

Using the Concerns-Based Adoption Model and Stages of Concern, continued

Stages of Concern (SoC) Table, continued

Stage 2	Personal
<p>Teachers and others want to know the personal impact of the change. Typical responses include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is this going to affect me? • I'm concerned about whether I can do this. 	
<p>Strategies leaders might employ:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	
<p>My strategies:</p>	
<p>1.</p>	
<p>2.</p>	
<p>3.</p>	

Using the Concerns-Based Adoption Model and Stages of Concern, continued

Stages of Concern (SoC) Table, continued

Stage 3	Management
<p>Teachers and others are concerned about how the change will be managed in practice.</p> <p>Typical responses include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I seem to be spending all my time getting materials ready. • I'm concerned we'll be spending more time in meetings. 	
<p>Strategies leaders might employ:</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	
<p>My strategies:</p>	
<p>1.</p>	
<p>2.</p>	
<p>3.</p>	

Using the Concerns-Based Adoption Model and Stages of Concern, continued

Stages of Concern (SoC) Table, continued

Stage 4	Consequence
<p>Teachers and others are interested in the impact on students and others. Typical responses include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is using this going to affect my students? • I'm concerned about whether I can change my practice in order to ensure that students will learn better. 	
<p>Strategies leaders might employ:</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	
<p>My strategies:</p>	
<p>1.</p>	
<p>2.</p>	
<p>3.</p>	

Using the Concerns-Based Adoption Model and Stages of Concern, continued

Stages of Concern (SoC) Table, continued

Stage 5	Collaboration
<p>Teachers and others are interested in working with colleagues to make the change effective.</p> <p>Typical responses include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm concerned about relating what I'm doing to what other teachers are doing. • Let's work together to move this idea forward. 	
<p>Strategies leaders might employ:</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	
<p>My strategies:</p>	
<p>1.</p>	
<p>2.</p>	
<p>3.</p>	

Using the Concerns-Based Adoption Model and Stages of Concern, continued

Stages of Concern (SoC) Table, continued

Stage 6	Refocusing
<p>Teachers and others begin refining the innovation to improve results for students and others.</p> <p>Typical responses include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have some ideas about something that would work even better than this. • I think we can take this initiative to a whole new level! 	
<p>Strategies leaders might employ:</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	
<p>My strategies:</p>	
<p>1.</p>	
<p>2.</p>	
<p>3.</p>	

Establishing and celebrating early wins

Purpose	Develop a strategy to recognize early wins in order to build momentum for long-term change.
Recommended time	2–3 hours
Materials	<p>Tool 3.5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Winning Strategy: Set Benchmarks of Early Success To Build Momentum for the Long Term,” pages 24–29
Process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read the article “Winning Strategy” on pages 24–29 to gain background knowledge on the tool and the concepts behind it. 2. In the article, pay special attention to the “essential characteristics of early wins” (Spiro, 2012, pp. 32; 35) on page 26. 3. Identify current actions that may qualify as early wins. Use the Early Win Wonder Tool table, pages 27–28, to determine which meet all essential characteristics of an effective early win. 4. After completing the tool and determining whether it fits criteria for an early win, reflect on the following questions (as outlined in the article): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Am I willing to put my credibility on the line to guarantee the success of this action? • Am I willing to postpone implementing the large action I really want to take until after the small, early win is successful? • Will I be able to implement an early win that is important to those affected, but seems relatively unimportant to me? Am I aware of what people perceive they are losing? Am I willing to build it into the proposed small, early win? • Am I absolutely certain this small, early win can be accomplished in the timeframe? • Am I prepared with a plan to build on the momentum of the early success? • Am I clear about where we go from here and what action comes next?

Establishing and celebrating early wins, continued

WINNING STRATEGY

Set benchmarks of early success to build momentum for the long term



By Jody Spiro

Change is a highly personal experience. Everyone participating in the effort has different reactions to change, different concerns, and different motivations for being involved. The results of change are long-term, but the change process is incremental and continuous. It is a series of destinations that lead to further destinations. The smart change leader sets benchmarks along the way so there are guideposts and pause points instead of an endless change process. “Early wins” — a term used to describe successes demonstrating concretely that achieving the change goals is feasible and will result in benefits for those involved — help accomplish this.

To bring people along, the leadership team needs to give those involved evidence at each stage that the change will succeed and that is likely to yield positive results.

That is especially true at the beginning, when skepticism about benefits and possible costs is often highest. An effective leadership team deliberately plans for small, early wins. These should be planned actions within the overall change strategy the leadership team is trying to achieve.

The leadership team should plan to achieve and document important results that are evident within the first few weeks. Of course, all involved must agree that achieving this “win” would result in something positive — that is, meeting a common definition of success — and further the overall change strategy. One benefit educators have is the immediacy of feedback from students or professional development participants. It is pretty obvious when the early win has hit its mark.

By doing so, the



Establishing and celebrating early wins, continued

“Winning Strategy,” continued



leadership team will inspire confidence that the rest of the initiative can be accomplished. However, it is critically important that, once the early win is selected and announced, the promised results are achieved by the stated deadline. To do anything less would risk deflating confidence in the initiative’s feasibility, which is the opposite of what the leadership team is trying to do.

HOW IT WORKS

Let’s say that the school’s goal is to improve student achievement or close the achievement gap. It is a recipe for failure to proclaim that goal in September and say that the “win” will be whether test results in June show that success. Yet that is often what happens.

The concept of early wins requires setting the objective of improving student achievement — such as in mathematics as measured by results on the June test increasing a specified amount. However, it is critical to plan backward from that June test. What steps can be taken along the way to ensure that the desired results will be

accomplished by June? What can be done within the first two to three weeks to produce something tangible and symbolic that all will agree is an important step in the right direction? This will give the confidence and momentum to go forward and also give the change leader something important on which to build.

This process involves several steps:

1. Identify the problem and define the objectives to address it.
2. Design the overall strategy to achieve the objectives.
3. Develop actions (activities) under the strategy.
4. Plan, implement, and publicize the early win.

OBJECTIVES, STRATEGY, AND ACTIONS

In the example cited above, the problem is that the school is underperforming in mathematics. The objective is to improve student achievement in mathematics as measured by this year’s June test scores compared with those of last June. The objective should be as specific as possible, stating

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which grade and the expected amount of increase in scores.

Numerous overall strategies can guide activity development. Change leaders might use the high-leverage leadership strategy of developing a professional learning community for school personnel (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010; Knapp, Copeland, Honig, Plecki, & Portin, 2010). With this strategy, participants can try new content and pedagogies to learn together how to improve mathematics instruction for students, which should lead to improved mathematics test scores.

There are several actions the leadership team might consider to promote professional learning. For example:

1. Find out which values are most prevalent among school personnel and therefore will be useful in planning further action steps for professional development.
2. Introduce data-based planning committees, where teams use data to identify the areas of greatest concern. Based on the results, develop action plans to address those areas.
3. Promote classroom visitations among teachers so they can learn from each other’s mathematics lessons.
4. Use technology to differentiate instruction in mathematics.

Once the leadership team has determined what is to be accomplished and how, the next critical step is to determine the best way to start or the early win, which needs to have the following characteristics.

ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF EARLY WINS

Regardless which win the leadership team chooses, it must be:

- Tangible and observable;
- Achievable;
- Perceived by most people as having more benefits than costs;
- Nonthreatening to those who oppose the strategy;
- Symbolic of a desired shared value;
- Publicized and celebrated; and
- Used to build momentum.

Tangible and observable

The early win must be obvious to see; a real result that can be put on paper or made real in ways that everyone can observe. Using data is important. The leadership team must define specifically what the result will be (a product or a measurable change from x to y). This will be the proof the leadership team will present at the deadline to demonstrate that the win has been accomplished.

Achievable

Above all, the leadership team must be absolutely certain it can accomplish the win. Failure to do so will do great damage to the cause. Failure will prove that this change is not feasible, so there is quite a lot riding on accomplishing the win by the established deadline.

Because those who support the strategy are already on board, the audience for the early win is those who might oppose the change or stand to lose something important to them as a result of the change. The leadership team will know who these groups are from the stakeholder analysis and the resistance analysis.

Perceived by most people as having more benefits than costs

The early win should further these gains so that participants can see how it will benefit them. In general, an education or training program is usually perceived as a benefit as long as it matches the readiness of participants. This means the program gives them skills or knowledge that they perceive they need and is not being imposed on those who believe they already have the skills or don’t need them.

Nonthreatening to those who oppose the strategy

Because those who support the strategy are already on board, the audience for the early win is those who might oppose the change or stand to lose something important to them as a result of the change. The leadership team will know who these groups are from the stakeholder analysis and the resistance analysis.

This will enable the leadership team to develop and implement an early win that will bring those who are resistant on board or at least signal to them that they should not be threatened by the change strategy. Another strategy is to develop an early win in an area that is the least threat to anyone.

Symbolic of a desired shared value

The early win is only of use if — after all these other considerations — it is perceived as important within the context of the organizational culture. It must be a symbol that says that important organizational values are being furthered by this win and therefore by the larger change strategy.

Publicized and celebrated

Once the early win is accomplished, the leadership team makes sure everyone knows about it, or it will be of limited use for the change strategy. The leadership team can arrange a celebration of this destination before taking on the next, larger activity.

Used to build momentum

As important as it is to have an early win, this technique only works once or twice. After the leadership team has established the momentum that an early win provides, it needs to

Establishing and celebrating early wins, continued

“Winning Strategy,” continued

EARLY WIN WONDER TOOL

Overall change strategy: _____

Early win action under consideration: _____

DOES THE PROPOSED ACTION MEET ALL ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EFFECTIVE EARLY WIN?	EVIDENCE (HOW?)
Importance: Accomplishing this will meet the common understanding of what constitutes success.	
Importance: It is not merely nice to do, but necessary to move the work forward; the action is considered an urgent priority by most.	
Tangible and observable: There is a transparent, observable outcome, either a specific work product or improvement measured by data.	
Achievable: You are certain the change can be accomplished within the stated time frame.	
Perceived as having more benefits than costs to most people: Individuals who will be implementing the action perceive benefits to achieving this early win — even if those benefits are not those that the leader articulates.	
Helps those affected deal with loss: The action creates a positive substitute for what people perceive might be lost through the change strategy.	
Nonthreatening to opposing groups: Groups that oppose the change would perceive benefits if this objective were accomplished.	
An area of relatively less interest: The change is in an area that excites relatively fewer passions by important stakeholder groups.	
Symbolic of shared values: The program is an important symbol in the culture.	
Plans to publicize: There are mechanisms to communicate the win broadly at the beginning and again at the deadline.	

Source: Spiro, 2011, pp. 95-96.

Establishing and celebrating early wins, continued

“Winning Strategy,” continued

EXAMPLE OF A COMPLETED EARLY WIN WONDER TOOL

Overall change strategy: Develop a professional learning community to improve mathematics instruction.

Early win action under consideration: Perform the values clarification exercise at the next faculty conference.

DOES THE PROPOSED ACTION MEET ALL ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EFFECTIVE EARLY WIN?	EVIDENCE (HOW?)
Importance: Accomplishing this will meet the common understanding of what constitutes success.	We would consider it a success to get to know each other better. It would also be a plus to have an experience where we could learn more about ourselves.
Importance: It is not merely nice to do, but necessary to move the work forward; the action is considered an urgent priority by most.	We need to “walk the talk” about being a learning organization; that starts with knowing what we really value.
Tangible and observable: There is a transparent, observable outcome, either a specific work product or improvement measured by data.	There will be a spreadsheet of data with the frequency with which each value was cited as important by our school.
Achievable: You are certain the change can be accomplished within the stated time frame.	This is a proven exercise that can be done in an hour. Results can be tabulated and distributed within a day.
Perceived as having more benefits than costs to most people: Individuals who will be implementing the action perceive benefits to achieving this early win — even if those benefits are not those that the leader articulates.	There is something of value here for everyone since they will be reflecting on their own values.
Helps those affected deal with loss: The action creates a positive substitute for what people perceive might be lost through the change strategy.	Doing this exercise demonstrates to everyone that whatever comes next will not upset the most important values.
Nonthreatening to opposing groups: Groups that oppose the change would perceive benefits if this objective were accomplished.	Everyone appreciates being asked about his or her values and having his or her voice be heard.
An area of relatively less interest: The change is in an area that excites relatively fewer passions by important stakeholder groups.	No group objects to finding out more about the values of its members. This information is useful to all as a basis for planning further steps.
Symbolic of shared values: The program is an important symbol in the culture.	We are finding out about our shared values, and doing this exercise shows how important it is to further those in our school.
Plans to publicize: There are mechanisms to communicate the win broadly at the beginning and again at the deadline.	We will publicize the compiled results the next day to the school community and plan our next actions for professional learning on the basis of furthering our shared values.

Source: Spiro, 2011, pp. 95-96.

Establishing and celebrating early wins, continued

“Winning Strategy,” continued

capitalize on that momentum, using the newfound credibility to develop the next, larger change strategy and reach for the larger win.

POTENTIAL EARLY WINS

The three possible actions listed here could have early wins associated with each as a first step. It is unlikely that everyone will see the merit in any one strategy, so starting small and tangibly is the way to go. For example:

1. To get data on school values, the leadership team might conduct a values clarification exercise at the next faculty conference. Such an exercise would have the double benefit of assisting each participant to reflect on what is meaningful to him or her as well as synthesizing the results to gain a perspective on values schoolwide.
2. To promote data-based planning committees, the leadership team might start with the grade that is most ready and have those teachers share their results with the rest of the school community within a specified period of time.
3. To promote classroom visitations among teachers, the leadership team might start with one or two pairs of teachers who are interested and have them report to the larger school community on what they learn in those visits.

The Early Win Wonder tool on p. 14 is devised to help leadership teams develop early wins and decide which to choose. Each early win can be subjected to the analysis of the tool. A completed version of the tool appears on p. 15. Self-reflection questions at right prepare the leader to use the tool.

USING THE TOOL

In using the Early Win Wonder tool to analyze these three potential early wins, the values clarification exercise at the faculty meeting emerges as the best choice for this example. Until the leadership team knows which values are most highly felt by everyone, it isn't possible to guarantee the success of the other proposed early wins. The other two proposed wins are less likely to produce success because they rely on the cooperation of “ready” teachers and on the acceptance of their positive experience by less-ready folks.

The early win provides the momentum to develop professional learning based on the shared values. For this example, professional learning activities could be differentiated so that those who value learning via data could participate in data-inquiry groups and those who value collaborative learning could participate in classroom visitation.

It doesn't take long to achieve early wins, allowing the leadership team to move quickly toward other, larger actions to achieve its objective.

Source: “Winning Strategy: Set benchmarks of early success to build momentum for the long term” by Jody Spiro, pp. 10-12; 14-16, in *The Learning Principal*, 33(2). Copyright 2012 Learning Forward.

LEADER'S SELF-REFLECTION QUESTIONS

FOR THE EARLY WIN WONDER TOOL

- Am I willing to put my credibility on the line to guarantee the success of this action?
- Am I willing to postpone implementing the large action I really want to take until after the small, early win is successful?
- Will I be able to implement an early win that is important to those affected, but seems relatively unimportant to me? Am I aware of what people perceive they are losing and building that into the proposed small, early win?
- Am I 100% certain this small, early win can be accomplished in the timeframe?
- Am I prepared with a plan to build on the momentum of the early success? Am I clear where we go from here and what action comes next?



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