

Crucial Conversations

By LaKetra Robinson

Change. Alter. Shift. Transform. Innovate. It's a necessity for true growth to occur. When I think of change, Michael Jackson's Man in the Mirror starts to play in my head. Change starts with me and I have to lead by example.

As I think about leading organizational change on my campus, one major area of focus has to be communication. I have already lead the way as a change agent on my campus by helping our school become an AVID National Demonstration School, twice. AVID is now, what we do and who we are. It took a great deal of dedication, encouragement, support, and uplifting of the staff to take us from point A to B. Every year, on a small level, I have to repeat the process with each new teacher that we hire. Although my administrators support my efforts, they give me full reign, within my leadership role, to keep our AVID system functioning with fidelity. As the coordinator, I am a lifelong learner who seeks to continuously hone my craft as not only an educator, but as a leader.

When I introduce my Blended Learning Innovation Plan, I will need to retrace my steps of being a change agent. I have to approach this from a different angle as the integration of technology can be a challenge for some. Much like when I was attempting to establish a schoolwide AVID system, teachers may initially think I'm asking them to "do something else" on top of their already hectic workload. My approach needs to be strategic and heartfelt. That's why I must start with the WHY. Crucial conversations will be needed to spark motivation and desire to be a part of this necessary change. Crucial conversations will be needed to help guide those who are not committed to our Influencer or 4DX plans, due to the constant "Whirlwind". Crucial conversations will be needed to keep the staff uplifted to sustain our efforts and accomplish our goals. As a self-differentiated leader, I have to be confident in my ability to be a change agent, stand strong and be ready to ride the waves!

So, what exactly is a Crucial Conversation? According to Patterson, Grenny, McMillan, and Switzler, it's a discussion where the stakes are high, opinions differ, and emotions are strong (2012). These conversations can arise at any given time. This is especially true when an element of change is being presented to an environment. It's not only important to prepare for such conversations but to recognize when you are in one. Patterson et al. have provided me with 7 guidelines to use to successfully resolve these foreseen crucial conversations.

Patterson, K., Grenny, J., McMillan, R., & Switzler, A. (2012). *Crucial conversations: Tools for talking when stakes are high*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.