
Leaders of Change

The primary responsibility of curriculum leaders is to develop the collective capacity of the organization to assure that all students are successful. One of the functions of these individuals' work to assure the capacity of the system and the success of the students is their *leadership in effectively and efficiently leading change and developing the capacity of others to deal with change.*

Effective curriculum leaders recognize that all school improvement is change and requires that we do or, better yet, develop the capacity of others to do the following:

- Create a sense of urgency for learning and school improvement.
- Use a theory of change/action to initiate and sustain change efforts.
- Nurture schools, staff, and stakeholders as they navigate through change processes.
- Balance pressure and support.
- Monitor and evaluate for desired results.

Tony Wagner of the Change Leadership Group advocates that the first task in any successful systemic change process is to generate greater understanding and urgency for the change. Leaders need to see more deeply into the *why* it is so hard for our *organization* to change, even when there is genuine, collective desire to do so. The same is true for looking more deeply into the *why* it is so hard for *individuals* to change, even individuals who genuinely intend to do so. Leaders of change initiatives who have clearly articulated the KASAB – the knowledge, attitude, skills, actions, and behaviors – of all stakeholders in the change are apt to provide a theory of change/action that achieves the expectations. Too often we focus on the knowledge and skills and fail to put the supports in place that will assure the intended behaviors. If we provide clarity for what people are held accountable, they will rise or fall to the level of the expectation.

To create the sense of urgency, we must replace “obstacles to improvement” with positive counterparts – purpose, focus, engagement, collaboration, and clarity in expectations – all of which release momentum for systemic and sustainable change.

Our job as leaders is to constantly challenge the status quo - to identify problems through constant two-way communication. Michael Fullan encourages a we-we approach around a common vision, where the educators create the answers for the needed change together. “Collaborative learning” becomes the model where educators collectively solve problems that inhibit effective learning and teaching to achieve that learning. They take risks and learn through their mistakes and the “wisdom of the crowd.” They publicly acknowledge the values of those mistakes, where errors become opportunities for learning, as well as the coaching received in order to attain the intended change.

This requires that we nurture our schools, our staff, and our stakeholders as they navigate through change processes. Purposeful interaction becomes crucial. After all, it is all about relationships. Teachers who work in learning communities supported by school leaders focus on improvement – of their students and themselves. Data and accountability for learning become essential. Successful growth is accomplished not just through professional development but through a culture that supports teachers’ day-to-day learning and engaging in improvement in what they do in their classroom and school. The ongoing data and access to seeing effective practices lead to success. Education and change are “de-privatized.”

Pressure and support become the sustaining work for us as change agents. Integrity (i.e., sincerity, reliability, honesty) and competence (i.e., skill, effectiveness) must be evident, and they require us to be change savvy. Our skills and our practices, our way of doing business, influence the educators’ trust in us. Covey calls it the “speed of trust.” Low trust results in low-speed, or even halted change – and a high

cost in finances and relationships. High trust does the opposite; it strengthens moral commitment and shared purpose. It builds the capacity for the change.

Monitoring for and evaluating the change provides data/feedback that are timely, accurate, and specific. Multiple and varied sources of data inform us throughout the change effort – in envisioning the change, in preparing for the change, and in enacting the change. These data help us answer the questions, “Where are we now?” “Where do we want to be?” “How are we going to get there?” and “How will we know we have arrived?”

Shared accountability is just as important in assuring the change is achieved. When participants in the change have clarity in accountability, fueled by shared commitment and sense of purpose, monitoring and evaluation of the change are welcomed and expected. Through the development of strong relationships, the trust grows, and professionals open up their practices to increase their own skills and to assure an increasingly effective standard of practice.

Michael Fullan in *Motion Leadership* summarizes the “skinny” of change this way:

- To get anywhere you have to do something
- In doing something you need to focus on developing skills
- Acquisition of skills increases clarity
- Clarity results in ownership
- Doing this together with others generates shared ownership
- Persist no matter what – resilience is your best friend.

Change – it is the only constant in education and life! Learn to deal with it!

Descriptors Aligned with Iowa Standards for School Leaders

- Designs and implements a systems approach for effective use of data (e.g., achievement, perceptual, processes, demographics, financial) to improve improvement process. (ISSL 1a)
- Supports the collaborative, inquiry-based approach for the design and implementation of plans informed by data, addressing root causes of strengths and challenges, and including performance goal. (ISSL 1a)
- Promotes collaborative processes with staff and is involved in reciprocal relationships with principals and other leaders to learn together. (ISSL 1b)
- Utilizes theory, demonstration, practice, and feedback for professional development that substantiates the improvement initiative. (ISSL 1b)
- Develops capacity in others to understand and increase knowledge of content and research-based best practices. (ISSL 1b)
- Creates and promotes a vision for high expectations and builds collective responsibility for the vision. (ISSL 1c)
- Operationalizes high expectations and assesses progress toward those expectations through performance assessments linked to clear standards that all must meet. (ISSL 1c)
- Eliminates initiatives that are not aligned with district goals or student learning needs and/or are ineffective in meeting those goals or needs. (ISSL 1d)
- Effectively and efficiently organizes and sustains resources, and implements processes and systems to support teaching, learning, and organizational effectiveness consistent with the district’s vision and goals and student needs. (ISSL 1d)
- Fosters a culture where productive relationships among stakeholders charged with leading or supporting targeted change results in intended improvements/changes consistent with district’s vision and goals. (ISSL 1c)
- **Lou FIX: Supports distributive leadership**
- **Provides coaching.**

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Participates in co-learning while modeling willingness to change.• Promotes communities of practice |
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Promotes communities of practice.

- Learning requires that supervision is frequent, rigorous, and focused on the effectiveness of instruction. Therefore, the majority of efforts of effective administrators must be on evaluating, coaching, and supporting teachers to do a first-rate job. Learning walks is one avenue to address effectiveness of instruction, but does require central office administrators' clear definition of attributes of quality teaching for learning as well as training and feedback for administrators in learning walks to assure a district-wide and standards-based approach in achieving the shared vision of teaching for learning. (Iowa Teaching Standard 4)