



# Facilitating & Navigating Change



**FIELER ELEMENTARY**

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# Background Leading to this Inquiry

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- Through my experiences of bringing about change in schools that I have led, it has usually been stressful and difficult, and in some instances, I have even taken it personal.
- Garnering staff buy-in and support has often been a struggle and a challenge for me.

# Purpose of this Inquiry



- The purpose of this inquiry was to evaluate and reflect on my personal approach to bringing about change.
- My goal with this AR project was to develop a level of self awareness and understanding in how I come across on my approach when bringing about change.

# My Wondering



- With this purpose, I wondered if my approach to the change process was the reason why people were resistant.
- What was it about my approach that made my staff not want to actively participate in the change process?
- Did I not do a good enough job explaining the *why*, the *who*, and the *how* of change so we can ultimately *do* the change?
- What led to my challenges? What was I doing or not doing? How was I coming across?

# My Actions



I began my action research by learning. I read the following books:

- **Time for Change: 4 Essential Skills for Transformational School and District Leaders by Anthony Muhammad and Luis F. Cruz**
- **7 Habits of Highly Effective People by Stephen Covey**
- **Mindset by Carol S. Dweck**

# My Actions



- I took the time and made it intentional to listen and understand what teachers and staff wanted and expected from me when bringing about change.
- I opened up and made myself vulnerable to constructive feedback, which isn't the easiest thing to do.
- I became much more reflective on my personal step by step approach to things.

# Data Collection



## Personal Reflections and Observations

- **Consistently met with and discussed the change process with my school leadership team**
  - Took notes on what they were wanting from me as we talked about upcoming needs/changes/improvements
- **Kept a weekly, reflective journal**
  - Used things I learned from my readings and applied them to my reality.

# Data Collection



## Staff Feedback

- **Teacher Survey – Word Cloud**
  - February
- **Met informally with individual teachers and staff**
  - Identified themes and consistencies from the feedback I was receiving



# My Data



appreciative respectful  
resourceful clear teamwork  
empathetic listens  
creative  
collaborative realistic trustworthy  
patient  
open-minded positive follow-through  
understanding knowledgeable approachable  
motivating  
visionary student-focused  
data-driven supportive transparent  
consistent

# My Data



## **Constructive Feedback:**

I sometimes:

- visibly show frustration when I don't agree with someone
- tend to talk over people
- try to persuade people to view things as I see them
- try to sell people on the change rather than get teachers to understand the need for the change
- the perception is that I come into conversations with my mind already made up

# My Data



- **Teachers and staff want me to:**
  - Not already have my mind made up OR give the impression that I have already made a decision
  - Have a clear vision and direction on how we are going to get there and is able to articulate that vision and direction
  - Talk less and listen more
  - Be visible and maintain a positive rapport with all staff
  - Be student focused and have evidence to support our decisions
  - Be patient, but balance that patience with a sense of urgency and follow through with action (don't waste their time)
  - Respect opposing views
  - Communicate and provide update throughout the change process

# My Discoveries



- **During this personal journey of self discovery, I found that:**
  - My past guidance, non-verbal communication, and approach to change was hindering teacher support. It was disconcerting to know that the areas of change weren't the cause for resistance, it was how I went about making the changes.
  - I was operating under a fixed mindset rather than a growth mindset. (Dweck, 2016)
  - I have learned to seek first to understand, then to be understood. (Covey, 2004)

# What have I learned?



## Learning Statement #1

Based on the staff conversations I had, I have learned when identifying areas of need to talk less and listen more. Teachers already have a profound sense of what needs to change and improve, and it is the responsibility of the administrator to navigate the change process with patience, transparency, and actionable results.

# What have I learned?



## Learning Statement #2

Once needs are identified, I have learned how to effectively develop a collaborative action plan that focuses on 4 investments with my staff:

1. Cognitive Investment – Why? – Communicating the Rationale
2. Emotional Investment – Who? – Establishing Trust
3. Functional Investment – How? – Building Capacity
4. Return on Investment – Do! – Getting Results

(Muhammad & Cruz, 2019)



# Where am I heading next?



- I have learned that, in general, teachers understand that change is inevitable. Teachers just want a leader who takes the time to get to know them and what the school needs are.
- Teachers also want to know their leaders listen to them with respect and an open-mind. Leaders must be approachable and not pass judgement when one shares their opinion, whether one's opinion is in agreement with them or not.
- I have a unique opportunity next school year to take what I have learned and apply it with a new staff in a new building.
- My new wondering will now be if resistance to change is preventable or lessened if I take the necessary steps to combat it?

# Bibliography



- Covey, S. R. (2004). *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. Free Press.
- Dweck, C. S. (2016). *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*. Ballantine Books.
- Muhammad, A., & Cruz, L. F. (2019). *Time for change: 4 essential skills for transformational school and district leaders*. Solution Tree Press.





## Facilitating & Navigating Change

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### **Background Leading to My Inquiry (Slide #2)**

We all know that change isn't always easy, and it can be especially difficult for some. It can also be especially difficult for administrators when they are charged with leading the change process and their approach is not intentional to meeting the needs of their staff.

Personally, my experiences of bringing about change in schools that I have led has usually been stressful and difficult, and in some instances, I have even taken it personally. Garnering staff buy-in and support has often been a struggle and a challenge for me. I knew I was doing something wrong somewhere along the way, but I didn't know what that was.

### **The Purpose of My Inquiry (Slide #3)**

Therefore, the purpose of my action inquiry was to evaluate and reflect on my personal approach to bringing about change. I wanted to develop a level of self awareness and understanding on how I come across in my approach when leading and navigating the change process.

### **My Wondering (Slide #4)**

With this purpose, we wondered if my approach to the change process was the reason why teachers and staff were resistant. What was it about my approach that made our staff not want to actively participate in the change process? Did I not do a good enough job explaining the *why*, the *who*, and the *how* of change so we can ultimately *do* the change? What led to my challenges? What was I doing or not doing? How was I coming across?

### **My Actions (Slide #5 & #6)**

I first began my action research by learning during the Fall of 2021. I read the following books:

- Time for Change: 4 Essential Skills for Transformational School and District Leaders by Anthony Muhammad and Luis F. Cruz
- 7 Habits of Highly Effective People by Stephen Covey
- Mindset by Carol S. Dweck

At the start of the new year, I took the time and made it intentional to listen and understand what teachers and staff wanted and expected from me as we started to discuss areas in need of

change or improvement. Throughout these conversations, I opened up and made myself vulnerable to constructive feedback, which isn't the easiest thing to do. The more conversations I had and the more I listened, I became much more reflective on my personal step by step approach to things.

### **Data Collection (Slide #7 & #8)**

The majority of my data was qualitative and was collected through personal reflections, weekly journal entries, takeaways from reading, observations, conversations with staff, and a staff survey.

### **My Data (Slides #9, #10, & #11)**



Qualitative data received from staff (constructive feedback):

- I tend to persuade people to view things as I see them.
- I sometimes try to sell people on the change rather than get teachers to understand the need for the change.
- I may give the perception that I come into conversations with my mind already made up.

Qualitative data received from staff (staff expectations):

- Have a clear vision and direction on how we are going to get there and is able to articulate that vision and direction
- Talk less and listen more
- Be visible and maintain a positive rapport with all staff
- Be student focused and have evidence to support our decisions
- Be patient, but balance that patience with a sense of urgency and follow through with action (don't waste their time)

## **My Discoveries (Slide #12, #13, & #14)**

### **During this personal journey of self discovery, I found that:**

- My past guidance, non-verbal communication, and approach to change was hindering teacher support. It was disconcerting to know that the areas of change weren't the cause for resistance, it was how I went about making the changes.
- I was operating under a fixed mindset rather than a growth mindset. (Dweck, 2016)
- I have learned to seek first to understand, then to be understood. (Covey, 2004)

### **Learning Statement #1**

Based on the staff conversations I had, I have learned when identifying areas of need to talk less and listen more. Teachers already have a profound sense of what needs to change and improve, and it is the responsibility of the administrator to navigate the change process with patience, transparency, and actionable results.

### **Learning Statement #2**

Once needs are identified, I have learned how to effectively develop a collaborative action plan that focuses on 4 investments with my staff:

#### **1. Cognitive Investment – Why? – Communicating the Rationale**

*Give educators the opportunity to logically understand the why of change.*

#### **2. Emotional Investment – Who? – Establishing Trust**

*Leaders must consider emotions when trying to create intrinsic commitment to change in a staff.*

#### **3. Functional Investment – How? – Building Capacity**

*Leaders cannot fairly require someone to complete a task that they have not properly prepared him or her to complete.*

#### **4. Return on Investment – Do! – Getting Results**

*A leader must demand a return on investment and properly exercise leadership authority to ensure compliance without intellectual or emotional consent from the resisting party (do).*

(Muhammad & Cruz, 2019)

## **Where I Am Heading Next (Slide #15)**

I have further learned that, in general, teachers understand that change is inevitable. Teachers just want a leader who takes the time to get to know them and what the school needs are.

Teachers are always willing to help with change as long as they know and understand what the why, the who, the how, and the DO are.

Teachers also want to know their leaders listen to them with respect and an open-mind.

Leaders must be approachable and not pass judgment when one shares their opinion, whether that opinion is in agreement with them or not.

I have a unique opportunity next school year to take what I have learned and apply it with a new staff in a new building.

My new wondering will now be if resistance to change is preventable or lessened if I take the necessary steps to combat it?

**Bibliography (Slide #16)**

- Covey, S. R. (2004). *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. Free Press.
- Dweck, C. S. (2016). *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*. Ballantine Books.
- Muhammad, A., & Cruz, L. F. (2019). *Time for change: 4 essential skills for transformational school and district leaders*. Solution Tree Press.