

# The Process of Change

*What principles of change do you need to understand in order to make successful and effective organizational change?*

- 1. Change is an ongoing process, not a short-term event.** We can get discouraged when we don't see immediate results. But real change requires ongoing support and resources, and it takes time. Michael Fullan, a leader in educational reform, notes that the process of implementing change is often most difficult in the first six months, no matter how well you plan. It's important to have realistic expectations about the time it will take to see significant progress and to make sure that other stakeholders in the community understand that as well.
- 2. Change occurs in individuals first, then in organizations.** The best program in the world won't succeed unless the people who are implementing it are ready and willing to make it a success. However, individual change is difficult if the organization is not supportive of the change. Therefore, as a leader you need to pay attention to individual implementer's needs and concerns and to work with key stakeholders in the community to successfully integrate the district's policies, programs, and practices into the system.
- 3. People go through change at different rates and in different ways.** You can't expect everyone to be ready at the same time to implement a change initiative. Some people need more information to be convinced. Some need more training to feel prepared. In his book *Diffusion of Innovation*, Everett Rogers identified five categories of "adopter types," based on the way people respond to a planned change:
  - **Innovators:** Innovators are eager to try new ideas. They can cope with uncertainty about an innovation and generally network with people outside their organization.
  - **Early adopters/leaders:** These are formal and informal leaders whose opinions are well-respected within the organization. Early adopters are not as far ahead of the average individual as innovators and are more trusted within an organization.
  - **Early majority:** Early majority members adopt new ideas ahead of average individuals but are not opinion leaders. They tend to deliberate for a while before adopting changes and adopt an innovation later than innovators and early adopters.
  - **Late majority:** Members of the later majority take more time to decide on changes and adopt them just after the average individual. Often, they don't adopt a change unless there is significant peer pressure or it becomes an economic necessity to change.
  - **Resistors:** Resistors are the last to adopt a change and, in fact, may never adopt it. Rogers noted them as likely to be isolated from the mainstream and often low in influence within an organization. However, resistors can also be influential in organizing others to block a change. Fullan encourages leadership to identify resistors' concerns early on in a change initiative and work to address their concerns.

It is important to be aware of individual differences among your implementers and to involve leaders in the initial stages of making change so that they can help bring others along more quickly.

**4. As people implement a new initiative, their concerns change.** For example, when implementers first hear about a new program or initiative, they might not be concerned about it. However, once they realize that they will be the ones implementing it, they will have concerns about what the initiative is and how they will be able to fit it into what they already do.

**The Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM)<sup>1</sup> outlines seven stages of concern that implementers are likely to experience:**

Stage	Expressions of Typical Concerns
<b>0: Awareness</b>	"I am not concerned about this initiative." "I don't really know what this initiative involves."
<b>1: Informational</b>	"I would like to know more about it." "There is a lot I don't know about this, but I am reading and asking questions."
<b>2: Personal</b>	"How will using it affect me?" "I'm concerned whether I will be able to do this well." "How much control will I have over the way I use this."
<b>3: Management</b>	"I seem to be spending all my time getting materials ready." "I'm concerned that we will need to spend more time in meetings."
<b>4: Consequence</b>	"How is this going to affect my students?" "How can I adapt this to have more impact?"
<b>5: Collaboration</b>	"How can I relate what I'm doing to what others are doing?"
<b>6: Refocusing</b>	"I have some ideas that could work even better than this."

Implementers' earliest concerns are likely to focus on "self" (Stages 1 and 2); next, they may have concerns about the task of implementing the new initiative (Stage 3); and finally, their concerns will likely center around the impact of the initiative they are implementing (Stages 4–6). Implementers may also have concerns in more than one stage at a time; for example, they might be concerned about the "how to's" of managing the implementation (Stage 3) as well as how it will affect their constituents (Stage 4).

**5. Different interventions can be designed to support implementers' changing concerns.** For example, if you recognize that someone is still in the informational stage, you can find additional ways to present information about the new initiative, perhaps by having someone who is using it in another community or agency talk about his or her experience.

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Hall, G., & Hord, S. (2001), *Implementing Change: Patterns, Principles, and Potholes*, Needham, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

**6. Leaders need to notice and adapt to different individuals' changing concerns.** For example, once someone begins using a program, he or she might need further suggestions about how to use the materials, even if that person had been trained prior to implementation. Implementers might also need opportunities to get together and share their experiences with and learn from one another.

**7. Leaders need to take into account the larger system in which a program is being implemented.** A change in one part of the system could affect another part. Before you implement an initiative or program, think about its possible impact on other individuals and the community. How can you engage and collaborate with partners and other key stakeholders in different parts of the larger system? How will you recognize and manage the impact of change in other parts of the system?

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