

## Initiating Change

One of my biggest takeaways from our initial zoom chat was the answer to how leaders should deal with negative staff. To support your change initiative, you need to supply your colleagues, not only negative ones, with concrete data. This will help to add validity and reasoning to whatever change you might be looking to implement. When I reflected on the change matrix, through the lens of a leader, three challenges or suggestions came to mind. I think when a leader is faced with the opportunity to insight change, they need to focus on their timeline, their variety of staff, and how they view their own position.

I think one of the most vital elements to initiating change is an overall timeline; the change matrix refers to this as an action plan. As a leader, establishing a timeline would help me to be thorough when navigating the phases of change. It would give me the opportunity to sets short-term goals, so I can share successes with staff throughout the process. Although an achievement may be not as significant, it should be celebrated, to share the feeling of accomplishment with your team. I know when I am working towards a long-term goal, it is difficult to stay focused when I am not given checkpoints to reenergize. In this case, that would most likely lead to crucial steps being overlooked. Kotter (1995) would agree that this is a critical error for a leader to make, since skipping steps creates only the illusion of speed and never produces a satisfying result. Setting these short-term goals may not be the solution to fix this issue for all leaders, but it is a practice I have relied on in the past.

Although I have only taught for four years, I have taught at two different schools and had three different grade level teams. Those experiences have taught me that while we may all be educators with a common goal of teaching our students, we are all unique individuals

with specific preferences on how to properly go about that process. I think it is an important trait of a leader to be aware of the variety of staff that they have in their building. Bringing about change can mean new opportunities for some and the loss of privileges and practices for others. Reeves (2017) states that change represents a loss—a loss of prior practices and a loss of an established comfort zone. Usually, this loss of practice is vocalized by veteran staff because they have become accustomed to their routines and schedules. Newer staff should also be given ample amounts of attention to buy-in to change; something more than a shiny PowerPoint speech with bells and whistles. If I were a leader initiating change, I would want my newer staff making an educated decision, not just being a sheep that follow the herd mentality. After my first year of teaching, I was given the rare opportunity to hire my teaching team for the following year, along with my principal. (For context, one teacher retired, and the two others moved to a new school). To prepare me for these interviews, my current principal gave me a list of the questions that would be asked, so I would feel more informed as to what I believed the appropriate answer to be. This small gesture made me feel a lot more knowledgeable throughout the hiring process and could have been something overlooked by a different principal.

The last challenge I focused on as a leader bringing about change is remembering your position. As a leader, you need to fully support and believe in the change that you are initiating. Kotter (1995) believes that major change is impossible unless the head of the organization is an active supporter. I believe that supporting the idea of change actively can look different in many circumstances. Therefore, the change matrix has a variety of factors that come together to make it a success. Skills being taught, incentives being offered, and resources being shared, are all examples of a leader showing their support. Until I read the “Limits of Change?”, by

Richard F. Elmore, I never thought of the possibility of a principal showing support for change brought about by a classroom teacher. Elmore (2002) discusses this instance by stating that real improvement comes when you visit a classroom where somebody is doing the same thing you are, only much better. Even though the position as principal may be seen as the top of the hierarchy within the school, it is important to know that showing humility can be a powerful act. In a past leadership course, we talked about leaders needing to surround themselves with other leaders and not followers. Furthermore, that your other leaders may possess strengths that you lack and celebrating that instance, instead of diminishing it, can lead to incredible achievements.

While reflecting on the challenges and components to driving change I paired the knowledge I gained from the readings with the experiences I have had throughout my career. I believe that they need to focus on their timeline, their variety of staff, and how they view their own position. There are a variety of practices that can be utilized when initiating change as a leader. These are a few that I think are important to remember throughout the process.

## References

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