CHANGE IS COMPLEX

Let's begin the conversation by watching this video: [The Backwards Brain Bicycle—Smarter Every Day.](#) In the video, welders have created a bicycle with a front wheel that turns to the left when the handlebars are turned to the right. Destin sets out to learn how to ride it; it takes him eight months! At one point, he makes the assertion that knowledge does not equal understanding when it comes to change. Destin knows the concepts required to ride the bike, but his brain doesn't fully have the understanding. The same is true of school settings—knowledge doesn't always equal understanding.

In general, there are two types of change that educators face—technical and adaptive changes (Heifetz and Linsky, 2002). Technical challenges can be easily identified and solved with tried and true solutions. For example, the office copier is producing lines and streaks on paper. However, adaptive challenges require innovative thinking; there is no proven solution that will work for all contexts. For example, math scores are not meeting proficiency standards.

In terms of adaptive challenges, Hord and Roussin (2013) propose six beliefs about change that lead to not just knowledge, but understanding:

    All change requires learning, and improvement requires change.
    Implementing a change through social action increases potential for success.

Individuals change before the school changes.

Change affects the emotional and behavioral dimensions of people.

People opt for change when they foresee potential for enhancing their work.

A change leader's role is to facilitate conversations that invite others to own the desired change.

These beliefs are particularly pertinent to changes in teaching and learning that are being proposed for the schools in the Southwestern Union. Three years ago the concept of Data Analysis for Continuous School Improvement was introduced that focuses on improvement as a continual process, not just an event, with links to accreditation. In addition, within the context of continuous improvement, we are beginning to use Standards-based Practices to redefine the vision for Adventist education. These two complimentary changes embody a significant paradigm shift from practices of the past and will entail not just knowledge but understanding to be sustainable for the future.

Additional information on how to manage the change process is included in a new publication—*The Learning Principal*—that is particularly helpful to leaders as they manage change in their context, design professional learning experiences that will support change, and leverage feedback and coaching for successful implementation (Psencik, Brown, & Hirsh, 2021). Principals, in particular, are "second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school" (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004, p.5). Yes, change is complex, but leadership is the catalyst and learning is the foundation for high-performing schools!

References

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