

FIRST- AND SECOND-ORDER CHANGE

We have stated in a previous blog that our leaders must have the capacity to respond continuously to change. Whereas the mission of Adventist education remains timeless and unchanged, how we deliver the mission through a shared vision for impacting teaching and learning should be continually improved to remain timely and relevant for each generation.



When speaking of change, it is useful to differentiate between first- and second-order change. First-order change works within an existing structure and involves doing more or less of something. The outcomes of the system remain the same; it is the means of producing the outcomes that change. Since there is often a lack of purpose behind the change, it becomes a checklist rather than a continuous look at improvement. Furthermore, because the focus is usually on single causes for a problem rather than considering the system as a whole, first-order changes are easier to make.

“The problem [with first-order changes] is that just implementing these strategies or programs does not translate into higher levels of learning for all students unless the underlying beliefs and philosophies of the people who are asked to actually utilize them change” (Kramer, 2017).

Second-order change involves seeing the world in a different way and challenging assumptions. It is sometimes described as transformational or disruptive, which involves new ways of doing things, changing beliefs and goals, new learning, and structural change in the organization. As a result of these organizational adjustments, second-order changes are more challenging and time-consuming.

First-order versus second-order change:

First-Order Change	Second-Order Change
Change from a 50-minute period to a 90-minute block at the secondary level.	Shift instructional practices to include engaging learners through active learning and discourse .
Change from a large school to small learning academies or houses in secondary schools.	Implement systems of support in school routines and practices to shift students from feeling isolated to having a sense of belonging.
Create a time for interventions during the school day.	Determine which specific students need a targeted intervention and work together to figure out how students will get the additional time and support needed to learn.
Implement positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS).	Create a culture of success and caring with clear expectations built on a level of respect and belief that all students can learn.

Adapted from Kramer (2017)

Second-order change, thus, supports our concept of Continuous School Improvement. Based on the analysis of data, a Continuous School Improvement (CSI) Plan is developed and implemented to transform the vision of excellence into strategic goals and action steps that introduce change related to areas of need. Two critical areas to support such a culture of change include collaborative cultures (PLCs) and professional learning.

Reference

Kramer, S. V. (2017). *What kind of change leads to learning for all?* Retrieved at <https://www.solutiontree.com/blog/category/authors>.