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ABSTRACT

Twelve essays and books reviewed in this annotated bibliography contribute information about how principals can identify the need for change and how they can implement successful change strategies. The literature contains several case studies as well as empirical research data. One study concludes that change is more likely to occur when administrators are hired from outside the district. Outsiders were also found to be more committed to their careers and to believe they had more persuasive ability in initiating change. Another author emphasizes the importance of questioning the motives of administrators when they propose changes. Among elementary principals, those with more experience or those who employed teacher aides were more frequently viewed as comprehensive change agents. The interpersonal climate of a school, the technological level of a district, and the personal characteristics, attitudes, and behavior of principals are also seen as important factors in the initiation of change. (WD)

THE BEST OF ERIC ON EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT

Number 55, December 1980

The Best of ERIC presents annotations of ERIC literature on important topics in educational management.

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ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management

The Principal as Change Agent

1 **Atkins, Victor,** and **Kauffman, Neil.** "Three Suburban Principals Talk about Change." *National Elementary Principal,* 56, 4 (March-April 1977), pp. 56-65. EJ 157 045.

Atkins and Kauffman arranged this interview with three principals from the suburbs of Boston in response to their concern "that a significant voice is missing from the sometimes noisy debate about education"—that of "thoughtful practitioners reflecting on their practice." In this article, the three principals—Mary, Barbara, and Richard—discuss how they were selected for their positions, how they judged what had to be changed in their schools, and how they went about implementing those changes.

Mary entered a school that was "very drab, very quiet, very structured." Mary had had "no administration courses whatsoever" and held no theory of change—traits she considered an advantage. Instinctively, she felt the need to change the school's environment.

Mary identified several traits of the principal as effective change agent. The principal should be a supplier of information, be able to "look at the structure of the school and isolate where the power is," and then be able to work with or around that structure. Finally, the principal should be an important role model, for "people don't do what you say, they do what you do."

Richard also entered a school that was in rough shape, with both the parents and staff badly divided. He refused to take sides and promoted a philosophy of "diversity as a strength." He formed and worked with numerous teacher committees to deal with specific problems, "which helped harness a lot of randomly dispersed energy onto a specific goal."

Barbara entered a better situation, but the school still had its problems. Her main change strategies were to increase the staff's access to information and to alter the power structure of the school. Essentially, "it came down to wrenching the power away from the aides" and redistributing it to teachers and team leaders.

2 **Drake, Daniel D.,** and **Schuttenberg, Ernest M.** "Toward Educational Excellence in an Urban Junior High School." *NASSP Bulletin,* 60, 401 (September 1976), pp. 89-94. EJ 153 061.

What specific techniques can be used by principals to foster change and innovation at the building level? In this article, Drake and Schuttenberg report in some detail the efforts of an urban junior high school principal "to lead his school toward educational excellence through the use of a collaborative strategy" of change. The principal utilized several resources from both inside and outside the school to effect change. He participated in a "year-long inservice Leadership Training Program," which enabled him to "forge closer ties with the central office and utilize its resources." He also had the assistance of a consultant from a local university who helped assess the organizational health of the school.

The principal took pains to open communication channels and involve teachers, students, and parents in the change process. Information was exchanged with the faculty by consulting with both their locally elected representatives and with informally organized faculty groups. Students and parents participated as members of various school committees.

A "Needs Assessment Task Force," consisting of teachers, parents, and students, was appointed by the principal to examine "the district and school educational philosophies" and then formulate and prioritize educational goals.

The "Organization Perception Questionnaire" was administered to nearly all the school's staff members. The data were analyzed first by computer, then by a faculty committee that made recommendations for needed improvements. Nearly three-fourths of the twenty recommendations were implemented that year, the authors report, to the great satisfaction of the committee members.

Finally, six volunteer staff members participated in a workshop on planning educational change at the local university. The authors report that the organizational improvement program has been highly beneficial and has created a participatory atmosphere in the school.

3 **Ganz, Harold J.,** and **Hoy, Wayne K.** "Patterns of Succession of Elementary Principals and Organizational Change." *Planning and Changing,* 8, 2-3 (Summer-Fall 1977), pp. 185-190. EJ 169 808.

What kinds of elementary principals make the most effective change agents? To help answer this question, Ganz and Hoy studied sixty New Jersey principals to determine the pattern of succession of the principals "as related to administrative behaviors, career orientations and change perspectives."

The researchers administered questionnaires to both the principal and the faculty of each school at regularly scheduled faculty meetings. Thirty of the principals were "insiders" (persons promoted from within the district) and thirty were "outsiders" (those hired from outside the district).

A key finding of the study was that "change is more likely to occur from administrators who are outsiders rather than insiders." This is true for superintendents and secondary principals as well as for elementary principals. The authors speculate that "perhaps

principals who are insiders spend too much time maintaining and protecting their own position rather than dealing with educational issues that may produce change."

The study also found that elementary principals who are outsiders tend to regard a change of jobs as necessary for advancement in their profession. Outsiders also were more committed to their careers and believed they had greater ability than insiders in convincing superiors of the need for change.

The authors note that there may be times when insiders are more desirable, if implementing change is the objective, however, outsiders will probably be more successful.

4 **Howes, Kimball L.** "Pathways and Pitfalls in Introducing Change." *NASSP Bulletin*, 60, 399 (April 1976), pp. 43-51. EJ 149 647.

"All organizations are like living physical organisms and, as such, are either growing or dying," states Howes. "Change is inevitable by the very nature of life." The success or failure of change depends largely on the political climate both within the school and exterior to it. Finally, change can be motivated by nearly any part of an organization.

In this diverse article Howes illustrates these concepts and others with a number of case studies of organizational change processes. He also reviews six recent publications that give insights, theory, and techniques for bringing about change.

Howes emphasizes the importance of questioning the motives of both the superintendent and the principal when they propose changes. Are they motivated by competition, under pressure from superiors, or obsessed with gimmickry? Are they really interested in improving the learning environment? What is their past record like?

Principals generally react to change in one of four ways. Many principals are truly committed to improving education and will support any change process that would help improve the learning environment. Other principals, primarily "conscientious veterans," are "primarily interested in running a quiet and tidy ship." They will attempt to implement change, however, if ordered from above.

The third group is innovative because "they view this approach as an opportunity to create a reputation as an aggressive change agent." Finally, a minority is so comfortable in their bureaucratic niche that they will resist change "to the bitter end."

5 **Johnson, Bruce,** and **Sloan, Charles A.** *A Study of Elementary School Principals' Self-Perceptions of Change Agent Behavior. Procedures for Adopting Educational Innovations/CBAM Colleague Report.* Austin, Texas: Research and Development Center for Teacher Education, Texas University, 1977. 30 pages. ED number not yet assigned.

The research literature on the role of the elementary principal is paradoxical. On the one hand, principals are expected to maintain the status quo as prescribed by society's norms, while on the other hand, they are expected to act as dynamic leaders of change. To determine just how principals view their role in bringing about change, Johnson and Sloan conducted this study of ninety-five elementary school principals from fourteen northern Illinois school districts.

Three means of data collection were used. The principals were rated by a committee of central office administrators regarding their involvement in change. The principals were also asked to rate their own behavior. Finally, the principals were asked to supply demographic information.

According to the data, experienced elementary school principals were more likely than beginning principals to be classified by central office administrators as comprehensive change agents. Another interesting finding was that principals who employed paid teacher aides were more often seen as comprehensive change agents. The authors speculate that with the present union situation "it may be essential to provide human resources in the form of teacher aides as a means to bring about significant educational change."

Regardless of how their superiors rated them as change agents, the principals studied "were cognitively aware of the administrative behaviors necessary to implement change." Principals rated as comprehensive change agents, however, did report a greater use of three behaviors: "developing the innovation as a group endeavor," "rewarding the faculty through visible recognition," and "systematically evaluating the innovation." This latter finding is particularly significant, state the authors, because evaluation is frequently overlooked in the change process.

6 **Krajewski, Robert J.,** and **Zintgraff, Paul E.** "Identifying Innovational Constraints: A Model for School Principals." *Educational Technology*, 17, 12 (December 1977), pp. 26-9. EJ 173 961.

Planning for educational change *seems* simple enough: first, identify the need for change; next, establish objectives and a plan of action to reach those objectives; and finally, establish an evaluation procedure to monitor the change process. Unfortunately, unforeseen problems usually come up that frustrate the change process. Krajewski and Zintgraff here outline a conceptual model designed to help principals identify "innovational constraints" and thus plan comprehensively for successful change.

Constraints can be of several different types: psychological, physical, temporal, sociocultural, legal, and fiscal. The constraints can be applied by the administrative hierarchy, students, teachers, or parents. In the authors' model, a matrix is formed with types of constraints as columns and those applying the constraints as rows. Using a rating scale of high, medium, and low, the principal indicates "the correlation between the constraint and the personnel group involved."

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The combinations given high ratings will likely be areas of significant constraint on the change process. The principal, having identified these areas, should then analyze them in detail. To help in this process, the authors have included two examples and a list of possible causes for the constraints given.

Once the process is complete, the principal will have both "a fairly sophisticated, logically developed list of significant constraints" and a good deal of "insight into how to deal with these constraints." The principal can then "establish objectives and specify a feasible plan of action for dealing with the constraints."

7 **Licata, Joseph W.** "Is the School's Social System Is the Principal an Effective Change Agent?" *NASSP Bulletin*, 59, 395 (December 1975), pp. 75-81. EJ 135 572.

In acting as a change agent, the principal has the advantage of being familiar with "the language, norms, needs, and aspirations of his school's social system." But the principal's role also has several drawbacks, some of which are described here by Licata.

First of all, the principal is an intimate part of the school system and thus may not be able to see the system "as a whole." In addition, the time and energy needed to act as a change agent may be severely restricted by "the day-to-day crises connected with running a building." The principal usually will not have the expertise necessary to implement change in many specialized areas, and may not have the power to do so even if he or she does have the expertise. Finally, the principal will likely have difficulty trying to simultaneously act as a helpful change agent and as a dispenser of rewards and punishments to teachers.

Despite these drawbacks, says Licata, there are ways for the principal to help "develop a social-emotional climate which facilitates innovation." The principal's verbal behavior is a key factor, because it communicates whether the principal is more interested in supporting himself or in supporting others.

When the principal is "other-supportive," he or she is helping to provide a climate for teacher, student, and parent participation. And since subordinates tend to model the behavior of their leader, the verbal behavior of the principal can influence the climate of change at all levels in the school building.

8 **Licata, Joseph W.; Ellis, Elmer C.;** and **Wilson, Charles M.** "Initiating Structure for Educational Change." *NASSP Bulletin*, 61, 408 (April 1977), pp. 25-33. EJ 162 115.

"Initiating structure," state the authors, "refers to a leader's behavior in delineating the relationship between himself and members of his staff, and in endeavoring to establish well-defined patterns of organization, channels of communication, and methods of procedure." By initiating a structure designed to enhance innovation, the principal can become a successful change agent in his or her school. In this article, the authors discuss one such "initiating structure": the organization and scheduling of committee meetings concerned with solving a school problem.

Too often, school administrators ask faculty members to hold committee meetings after school. But, state the authors, "after-school meetings just don't make sense"; teachers who are fatigued and suffer from "stimulus overload" after school are in no condition to effectively participate in creative decision-making.

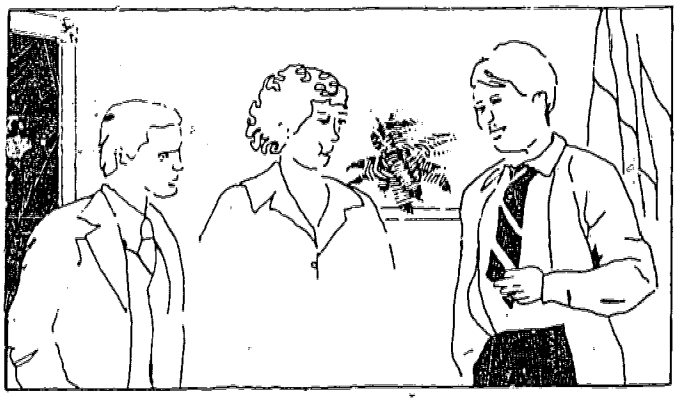
The answer, of course, is to find ways to schedule released time for committee members during the regular school day. The authors suggest that administrators brainstorm to come up with alternative ways to schedule released time during school hours. A list of twenty-seven alternative scheduling ideas is presented to help in this process.

Once the alternatives are generated, the administrator should list them along with both their intended consequences and their "anticipated negative consequences for the school organization." In this form, the alternatives can be weighed against one another and ranked to develop a "contingency pool" of alternative plans.

Once the committee is organized, the principal should nurture the commitment of its members to help assure that it will be productive and innovative. The committee members should be consulted about the organization of the committee and its time and place of meeting. When teachers can participate in developing and organizing the committee, state the authors, they will be much more committed to its goals.

9 **Littrell, J. Harvey.** "A Research-Based Technique for Selecting Chairpersons." *NASSP Bulletin*, 62, 417 (April 1978), pp. 24-8. EJ 175 598.

Teachers will often resist any changes made in the curriculum or instructional program. Thus, it is imperative that the chairpersons of curriculum committees "be individuals who can help others to accept changes," states Littrell. Usually, chairpersons are selected on the questionable bases of "seniority, youth, light loads, turn-



taking, or status." A much better method of selecting chairpersons, says Littrell, is to use a technique based on "the research which has identified the characteristics of good change leaders."

This research indicates that good change leaders are viewed by teachers as "not too different" from themselves and "only slightly better" in instructional ability and socioeconomic status. Preferably, these leaders are "not innovators" but instead are "early adopters of innovation." They have access to information outside the local area—through attending conferences and reading journals—and are perceived by their peers to have good judgment.

Based on these findings, Littrell constructed a questionnaire—presented here—that is designed to help principals identify teachers' preferred committee chairpersons. The anonymous questionnaires ask teachers to identify and characterize the persons they would turn to first for instructional advice.

Littrell outlines the procedures the principal should use in tabulating and interpreting the results of the questionnaire. The end product is a list of individuals who "are perceived by others as best satisfying the criteria for good change leaders."

10 **McIntyre, D. John.** "Attitude Change Models—Meaning for Principals." *NASSP Bulletin*, 63, 425 (March 1979), pp. 45-48. EJ 197 824.

"Promoting change is a more complex process than simply systematically planning the change of a curriculum, school philosophy, or staff utilization," states McIntyre. Effective change requires, above all, a change in the attitudes of those affected by the change. Thus the success of a principal as change agent depends, in large part, on his or her understanding of how and why people's attitudes change. McIntyre here describes several models of attitude change to help principals toward an understanding of this critical aspect of organizational change.

The "congruity model" provides "a generalized attitude scale which permits one to predict the direction of the individual's attitude change." For example, if a principal is highly rated (a "+3") in the eyes of teachers, and this principal wants to introduce a textbook perceived as a "−1," there will most likely be a change in attitude toward the textbook because of the principal's prestige.

In the "reinforcement theory" of change, the acceptance of change is dependent on the incentives offered to make the change. Incentives may be "arguments or reasons supporting the proposed change" or "rewards and punishments" that would follow acceptance of the change.

The "dissonance model" maintains that "coercion can be a positive force in changing an individual's attitude." Teachers induced to change their attitude by coercion will be forced to rationalize their action by acknowledging, at least publicly, that their attitude has indeed changed. Finally, McIntyre reviews Maslow's "Hierarchy of Human Needs" model, which assumes that "a self-actualized person is more conducive to accepting change."

11 **Miskel, Cecil G.** "Principals' Perceived Effectiveness, Innovation Effort, and the School Situation." *Educational Administrative Quarterly*, 13, 1 (Winter 1977), pp. 31-46. EJ 158 804.

"Principal effectiveness is a multidimensional concept," states Miskel, and includes three components: "innovation effort, perceptual evaluation by subordinates, and perceptual evaluation by superordinates." Each of these three components might influence the other two. In addition, two "situational factors"—the interpersonal climate in the school and the technology level of the school district—may influence each of the three components of principal effectiveness.

To determine which variables had an influence on the components of effectiveness, Miskel conducted a study in thirty-nine of the largest school districts in a midwestern state. From five to twelve principals in each district were surveyed, along with eight teachers serving under each principal, and the immediate supervisor of each principal.

Innovation effort was defined and measured as the "number of new programs initiated or maintained by the principal to improve the organizational functioning of the school building." Technology level ("the extent to which the school district is using modern administrative practices") and the interpersonal climate of the school were measured using a "Situational Description Questionnaire."

The results of the study showed a complex pattern of influences on the components of principal effectiveness. Each of the three components of effectiveness was found to influence the other two. In addition, the subordinates' evaluations of the principal were affected by the interpersonal climate of the building, and the innovation effort of the principal was affected by the technological level of the district.

Miskel concludes that the difficulty in starting new programs may be explained in part by the complex system of variables that affects the principal's innovation efforts, which can "combine to make the forces surrounding innovation and the expected role of the principal very hard for the administrator to understand and control."

12 **Trump, J. Lloyd,** and **Georgiades, William.** *How to Change Your School.* Reston, Virginia: National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1978. 75 pages. ED 162 425.

Although teachers, parents, and students participate in the change process, state Trump and Georgiades, "the fact remains that the person in charge sets the tone and the methodology of change." Thus, it is essential that the principal understand the nature and process of change. To help principals gain this kind of understanding, the authors here "raise questions and suggest possible answers" about the change process at the school site. The advice presented is based on the authors' experiences in the NASSP's Model Schools Project.

The first step is to identify what needs to be changed. To facilitate this process, the authors list numerous examples of possible changes that a principal might be considering. After establishing a tentative list of needed changes, the principal should prioritize the list and check with others on the rankings.

The steps taken by a principal to elicit change are essentially the same steps taken by a good teacher to stimulate learning. The goals of the change should be identified and understood. Positive motivation should be used to stimulate people to change, and the individuals involved should participate in decision-making. Finally, plans for evaluation of the change process should be made at the same time the change itself is being planned.

Other chapters deal with collecting information needed for effective change, coping with dilemmas in the change process, and accepting personal responsibility for outcomes. The balance of this publication contains a mix of questions, examples, and suggestions designed to stimulate thinking about the change process in schools.

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