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ABSTRACT

This guide, intended to help rural educators improve their school or district, connects general knowledge about educational change efforts and knowledge about conditions and characteristics specific to rural education. Chapter 1 discusses common strengths and weaknesses of rural schools and describes values and social patterns in small schools and communities. Chapter 2 explains critical dimensions of the change process and examines research that documents the experiences of rural schools attempting to adopt new practices. It describes the Concerns Based Adoption Model as a framework for understanding the changing attitudes and behaviors of teachers and administrators in an improvement program. Chapters 3, 4, and 5 deal with initiation issues: (1) preliminary tasks such as clarifying participants' desires and expectations, building relationships, and forming a school-improvement team; (2) assessment of needs and strengths, outlining the problem, and setting goals; and (3) identifying an ideal solution and the resources needed to attain it. Chapter 6 describes activities involved in preparing for implementation: creating awareness, assigning roles to participants, and making logistical arrangements. Chapters 7 and 8 discuss implementation and evaluation activities. Chapter 9 considers how to maintain and continue the change. Each of the chapters discusses the critical tasks and components of the specific phase of the improvement program, examines related research and experience in rural schools, and presents a dialogue among four rural educators. This handbook contains 33 references. (SV)

Managing Change in Rural Schools
AN ACTION GUIDE

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The Regional Laboratory for Educational Improvement of the Northeast & Islands

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Foreword

A large amount of public attention, as well as educational research, focuses on urban and suburban schools. People assume that rural schools have few problems of any real magnitude: how could we, given our size and our senses of community and shared responsibility?

But those of us who live and work in rural settings know better. We know that, although our schools and communities have many wonderful features, they also have unique problems that accompany small size and remote location.

At the same time, we have some issues in common with our urban and suburban counterparts. More than anything, we share both the need and the desire to restructure our schools and to focus our energies and resources on learner outcomes that will equip students for the 21st century.

This means change. In fact, it may mean many changes going on at the same time. No matter where you are in changing your school, there are things about managing change that you deserve to know. School improvement and restructuring are not neat, linear endeavors, yet the change process is manageable.

As rural educators, we have learned to live with too few resources available to us -- too few resources that recognize the subtle differences and similarities between rural and larger settings. Thus, Managing Change in Rural Schools is a welcome aid to those of us who are concerned with change and the future of rural schools.

Based on their experiences both in rural schools and as technical assistance providers, the authors bring to life the complicated process of managing change. They have succeeded in taking a rather "dry" process and enlivening it with examples from real life.

Action-minded teachers, administrators, and consultants will treasure this book. While many of the examples are from the authors' work in the Northeast, we will all recognize the universality of the rural experience. Pick it up and start anywhere: you will find something that will not only catch your interest, but may also give you enough of a boost to push you over the top and help you get started on that change you have been thinking about.

David M. Trujillo
1990-1991 President
National Rural Education Association

Acknowledgments

This action guide represents the collaborative efforts of not just the authors, but many practicing educators who worked closely with us to develop case studies of their change efforts, attended focus sessions, and acted as reviewers -- in addition to our many thoughtful colleagues here at The Regional Lab. We are indebted to all for their support, insights, guidance, and patience with ever-moving timelines.

In particular, the reviewers of the initial outline and draft chapters helped us gain momentum, gave us focus, and provided many helpful suggestions. They are Bradley Blanchette, a member of The Regional Laboratory's Board of Overseers and a teacher in rural Vermont; Mike Cormier, superintendent of three small coastal towns in Maine; David Monk, author and professor in the Department of Education at Cornell University; Heidi McGinley, Maine Department of Education; Jack Sullivan, Director of the New England School Development Council and of The Regional Laboratory's Rural, Small Schools Network; Carolyn Burke, Assistant Director of the Rural, Small Schools Network; and Paul Nachtigal, Co-Director of the Rural Initiative at the MidContinent Regional Laboratory.

Many others contributed to the perspectives represented in this book and how they could be most helpful to people in rural and small schools. Before we started writing, we convened focus groups from rural schools and districts and state education agencies. We thank our Lab colleague, Cheryl Williams, who led the groups, and all those who gave of their time and expertise to help make our guide more focused and meaningful.

Many of the examples in the book came from case studies of our work in rural schools, ably developed by our Lab colleagues Pat Cox, Jill Kaufman, and Jane deFrees. We thank them for helping us bring the book to life.

We would also like to thank the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) and The NETWORK, Inc., co-publishers of An Action Guide to School Improvement, for authorizing the use of the framework and some of the materials from that book.

Janet Angelis, the Lab's Communications Coordinator, provided invaluable assistance in helping us move this book from a manuscript to an actual publication. Finally, the patience and perseverance of the Laboratory's word processing genius, Clif Lund-Rollins, is an inspiration to all of us. Thank you!

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Contents

Introduction

This is a guide, a reference book, for educators in rural schools who are working to improve some aspect of their school or district. By *rural* we mean schools and communities that are small, relatively isolated from cities and suburbs, and that perceive themselves to be different from their urban counterparts. By *improvement* we refer to the entire spectrum of reforms undertaken by schools and districts regardless of their size and location -- from changes in instructional method in a single grade level, to curriculum innovations affecting one or more subjects at all grade levels, to strategic planning and restructuring efforts undertaken by a district and its community.

Our purpose is to connect two lines of educational research and practice: What is known about educational change efforts in general, and what is known about the conditions and characteristics of rural education in particular. At one time or another all of us have taken part in discussions that pit general claims about school improvement against claims of unique conditions in rural education. A generalist will say something about the benefits of initiating a school change in a certain way, and a rural advocate may respond, "Yes, but. . . ." Our intent is to broaden the perspective to **encompass both the general and the unique.** In the course of our work with rural schools we have been asked many times to synthesize the general research and show how it applies to unique rural conditions. This book is our attempt to do so for other rural educators.

To help us frame our discussion, we rely on the seven steps for change efforts outlined in An Action Guide to School Improvement (Loucks-Horsley & Hergert, 1985). While the steps suggest a linear progression, we want to stress that they do so for purposes of clarity. They do not constitute a prescription to be taken as directed. We use them as organizers for discussions about the critical dimensions of school improvement.

Any effort to improve a school involves change, and much is known about what happens during the course of effecting change in classrooms, school buildings, and districts. **Our emphasis is on understanding and managing the process of change** -- what the research and our experience have to say about predictable (and manageable!) developmental patterns that people and their organizations go through as they adopt new practices, and what can be done to optimize chances for success.

We also want to emphasize the **systems context** in which change occurs. Rural schools and communities can no longer be viewed or treated as separate parts of a larger whole -- whether a classroom in a school, a school within a district, or a district within a county or state. **Each is part of and connected to a universe that is dynamic rather than static. Both within and without school and community boundaries, component parts are integrally related to and affected by each other.** By taking such a **systems approach** we can finally recognize and begin to make sense of the **multiple, simultaneous, and interrelated changes** that occur in rural schools and communities.

In fact, we believe that rural schools and communities offer the best opportunity to observe the systemic nature of education in general, of how people, policies, processes, and practices in schools are inextricably linked to each other.

Each step of the process described by Loucks-Horsley and Hergert provides the basis for a chapter that (1) describes the critical components and tasks involved in that phase of the improvement effort, along with discussion of relevant aspects of the change process, (2) discusses related research and experience in rural schools, and (3) presents a dialogue between the authors. The seven steps are:

- Starting an Improvement Project
- Assessing and Goal Setting
- Identifying an Ideal Solution
- Preparing for Implementation
- Implementing the Project
- Reviewing Progress and Problems
- Maintaining and Continuing the Change

As we said above, these steps are organized for discussion rather than as a formula to be followed from start to finish. We believe that the seven steps make your effort more manageable by imposing some order on a complex set of tasks. If you are in the midst of a project, you will likely find that you have already accomplished some of the early steps. Indeed, we hope that what you read here **will** sound familiar, for the planning and management of successful educational practices builds on research that documents a solid base of common sense and the wisdom of experience. And even if you are starting at the beginning, you may find yourself working on two steps at once. We encourage you to be flexible and thoughtful about meeting the needs of your own situation and to reflect on prior experiences, both good and bad, that can help you engage in the next one.

Unique conditions and characteristics in rural education, both real and perceived, are informed by several sources. First, The Regional Laboratory for Educational Improvement of the Northeast and Islands and its parent organization, The NETWORK, Inc., have engaged in educational reform efforts in hundreds of schools in rural and non-rural settings for over twenty years. We and our colleagues have worked in a wide range of capacities -- conducting research and evaluation, developing new programs, policies, and curricula, and providing training and technical assistance in classrooms, school buildings, districts, states, and at national levels. Second, for the past three years The Regional Laboratory has been a part of the National Rural Initiative, a federally funded project to define similarities and differences between rural and non-rural schools. Each of the ten regional educational laboratories is involved in the national initiative.

One of the major focuses for our laboratory during the first phase was a rural schools demonstration project with eleven schools and districts from throughout our Lab's region (New York, New England, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands). The participating schools were engaged in a variety of school improvement efforts, ranging from curriculum and instructional innovations, to strategic planning at the district level. All of the sites received training and technical assistance related to their particular innovation, some provided directly by Lab staff, and all sites participated in case studies conducted by The Regional Laboratory. A cross-site analysis of the case studies, our direct experience in providing training and technical assistance to rural schools, and ongoing collaboration with other

regional laboratories participating in the National Rural Initiative all combine to give us a clearer understanding of the conditions and characteristics of rural schools engaged in improvement efforts.

Throughout the Guide are examples of our experiences with improvement efforts that illustrate the range of strengths, weaknesses, constraints, and opportunities to be found in rural schools. At the end of some of the chapters our Author Talk suggests issues and areas that we continue to "chew on" as we work in rural settings throughout our region.

Chapters 1 and 2 provide a context for the steps involved in school improvement that are addressed in Chapters 3 through 9. Chapter 1 starts by talking about the uniqueness of rural schools. At the same time, we recognize the growing diversity of these schools and communities. Indeed, the argument for uniqueness is getting harder to sustain, for within the perceptions, claims, and realities of rural and small town life, paradoxes abound -- traditional images of who lives there, why, and how they make their livings, are no longer as crisply drawn as Currier and Ives prints. If you're reading this from the perspective of a rural educator, you are probably quite aware of the diversity within your own community and between yours and other small towns and districts.

In Chapter 2 we present an overview of critical dimensions of the change process, information about research on educational reform efforts that documents what typically happens when schools set out to adopt new practices and what seem to be the ingredients for successful change. Chapters 3 through 9 build on this dual base of information and, we hope, help you take a fresh look at important issues in your own community.

Chapter 1:

How Unique Are Rural Schools?

In virtually all of the rural communities with which we've worked, people cite the closeness of relationships and the small school size that enable teachers, students, and parents to know each other well. Nearly all talk of easy and quick access to resources and decisionmakers. For example,

- The Head Teacher in an elementary school in Belchertown, Massachusetts, finds that "an answer is just a phone call away. I may not always like the response, but I get it quick."

- The principal of the Roxbury Community School in Vermont is able to talk daily with the chair of the school board who comes to the school to pick up her kindergartner everyday. "We talk about what's going on in school. We don't make decisions, but we talk."

- By contrast, one of our colleagues tells about being in a school with more than 900 students, and spending a half hour looking for a teacher who had spent the same half hour looking for her!

We make no pretense about the issues presented in this chapter: the strengths and weaknesses we suggest are neither complete nor mutually exclusive. You'll need to think about notable issues in your community and perhaps add strengths or weaknesses that are truly unique to your situation. For discussion purposes, we start with a list of strengths and weaknesses that are generally associated with rural schools (Stephens & Turner, 1988):

Commonly acknowledged strengths

- small class sizes
- greater individual attention
- low dropout rates

- safe, orderly environments
- development of student leadership qualities
- strong faculty identity and commitment to the school
- strong parental and community interest in the school

Commonly acknowledged weaknesses

- lack of breadth and depth in the instructional program
- lower student performance
- inadequate instructional support system
- inadequate management support system
- inadequate professional development
- limited capacity to recruit and retain teachers and administrators
- inadequate financial resources

Other issues that apply in some small schools and communities:

- There is more homogeneity of values and more resistance to change.
- Social problems tend to be identified with individuals rather than as more generalized conditions.
- Administration is more personal and flexible (or inflexible!).
- Curriculum and instruction is more student-centered, collaborative, and adaptable.
- The school is often the only visible social institution in the community -- i.e., there is no insulation from public view.
- There is limited access to and affordability of outside help.
- Cultural, physical, and social isolation may be apparent, but there is little isolation technologically.

A major problem with lists like these is that they immediately set up dichotomies. Items that ring true for some of you will set off alarm bells for others: yes, there is indeed strong parental and community interest in rural schools, but "interest" doesn't necessarily mean "support"; increasingly, multiple and strongly held points of view are apparent in rural communities. And yes, classes do tend to be smaller, but to what advantage if instructional and curriculum needs can't be accommodated in this year's budget?

The fact is that the stereotypical small town is hard to find nowadays. As the number of family farms diminishes, as urban and suburban sprawl encroaches on open land and outlying communities, as new industries seek space and lower tax bases, and as small communities get "discovered" by people in search of a "simpler" way of life, changes inevitably occur. In subtle and not-so-subtle ways, community norms and values begin to change. Towns in Maine, Vermont, and upstate New York, for example, that used to think of themselves as tucked away in remote pockets of their states, as wedged up against international borders and, therefore, isolated from the mainstream of the country as well as their state, now see themselves in different and not necessarily pleasant ways. Two examples of "typical" small New England towns illustrate what we mean:

- Eastport, Maine, is as far "Down East" as you can get -- Campobello Island is less than a mile across the water, and the southern tip of New Brunswick outlines the far side of the deep-water harbor. Twenty years ago about 7,000 people lived here, supported mainly by 25 or so fish canneries. In the last 10 to 12 years all of the canneries closed, and as recently as five years ago the population was less than 3,000. And now? A large aquaculture company has over two million salmon maturing in large pens in the Atlantic, and several smaller aquaculture companies have opened operations in Eastport; land and business developers are moving in, and real estate prices have risen nearly 100% in the last three years; at least six bed and breakfast inns have opened in the last two years; and the town's sister city in Japan has added Eastport to its regularly scheduled passenger cruises from Japan.

  There are strongly mixed reactions to these changes in Eastport: some parents are glad that jobs will be available to keep their children from moving away, but worry that their children will never be able to afford the cost of Eastport homes; people who moved there because of its isolation now fear that Eastport will "just be another Bar Harbor -- overrun by tourists willing to pay prices we can't afford"; and local entrepreneurs want to seize opportunities to transform a town they care deeply about.

- Rochester, Vermont (population 3,000), is at the northern end of the Green Mountains; the border crossing into Quebec is about a mile from the center of town. The population hadn't changed much in

recent decades, and the town always thought of itself as a second cousin to the rest of Vermont and even more removed from French-speaking Quebec. Then technology came to the area: elementary school children are linked by interactive computer to schools nationwide in a project that monitors weather conditions, wind patterns, and the path and effect of acid rain; the youngsters (and many of their parents!) find that they are indeed connected to other parts of the country and continent. More recently, a retired engineer from Montreal has launched a high-priced, high-tech experiment in the area by hard-wiring all telephone lines for demonstrations of the potential for interactive communications in business, government, and community life -- at local to global levels.

So the children know that acid rain is real, that it can be tracked from the Midwest to the Northeast; but neither they nor their parents are quite sure what to do with this information. And what can or should be done with the capacity to communicate clearly with someone halfway around the world? Are there costs that will need to be absorbed after the demonstrations are over? What are the implications for schooling in Rochester, given these infusions of technology and awareness of their interrelatedness with other states and countries?

At the same time, there are other dynamics at work in communities like Eastport and Rochester. Those of you who live and work there understand how the size of small towns and schools affects relationships between students, parents, board members, teachers, administrators, support staff, and other community members. Lines of communication are direct and immediate, unlike the layered bureaucracies and impersonal tone of urban and suburban communities.

Of course, one of the results of such closeness is a higher intensity of social interactions than one is likely to find in larger communities and, perhaps as a direct result of the intensity, the fact that the credibility of the message is related as much to *who* said it as to *what* is said.

As a former BOCES (Board of Cooperative Education Services) District Superintendent in upstate New York observes, there is a "higher level of influence in decision making in rural schools . . . at least in perception. But what they lack in bureaucratic constraints is made up for in public

pressure -- turmoil in a rural school signals something wrong, not just a debate." In his view, intense relationships are difficult to sustain, and considerable effort is often exerted to avoid conflict in small towns and schools, especially when the participants know that they will be dealing with each other time and again in other contexts. Thus, when turmoil is apparent something significant is indeed happening.

In the course of writing this book -- reviewing the literature, analyzing our own data, and talking with rural educators and researchers throughout the country -- we have confirmed that there are indeed unique conditions, constraints as well as opportunities, at work in rural schools and small towns. Whether or not we have developed definitive lists of strengths and weaknesses is not the issue. As we said earlier in this chapter, the problem with lists of pros and cons is that they set up dichotomies. Rather, **the premise from which we write is that *perceptions* about rural school life are as important as the facts.** As people join with you in discussions of how schooling might change in your community, as facts and figures are debated and future scenarios considered, their assessments will be strongly influenced by their perceptions -- values, beliefs, and attitudes -- of what it means to live in and educate their children in a small town.

Chapter 2:

What Is Known About Educational Change

Before discussing the seven steps essential to changing schools, we want to briefly describe **two conceptual frameworks** to explain, in part, why we believe and recommend the things we do. The first framework addresses **the three major phases that are apparent in any school improvement effort: Initiation, Implementation, and Continuation** (Fullan, 1991; Crandall & Associates, 1982; Berman & McLaughlin, 1978). The second conceptual framework is **the Concerns-Based Adoption Model, or CBAM** (Hord et al., 1987), which describes the changing feelings and behaviors of individuals (teachers, administrators, and others) as their reform and improvement efforts proceed through the three major phases.

We'll start by defining the three phases and then review what typically happens as school improvement efforts proceed. **Initiation** (sometimes labeled adoption or mobilization) begins with awareness of the potential for change and leads up to the decision to adopt a new practice or proceed with a plan. Chapters 3, 4, and 5 deal primarily with initiation issues. Chapter 6 depicts activities that bridge the gap between the first phase, initiation, and **Implementation**, a phase which typically encompasses the first two or three years experience of putting changes into practice. Chapters 7 and 8 also deal with implementation issues. **Continuation,** the subject of Chapter 9, encompasses the decisions and actions taken to permanently embed the change into the system or to reject it.

The third phase has often been called "institutionalization," to denote whether or not an improvement effort has been incorporated into regular budgets, policies, curriculum guidelines, and the like. But in the context of larger change efforts like restructuring and strategic planning the term seems inappropriate and bureaucratic. Instead, restructuring and strategic planning are ongoing processes that are intended to promote constant growth and renewal of the system rather than fixed stopping points for reform efforts. Some school improvements do need to be institutionalized,

but they also need to be considered in the larger context of schooling, which will inevitably be confronted with pressures and desires to change.

Information on what happens during the three phases is found under a variety of headings -- school improvement, school reform, restructuring, redesign, innovation, adoption of innovations, curriculum development, staff and professional development, organizational development, and leadership. Educational change means different things to different people. **In the absence of common definitions, it's often difficult to separate out the significance of one type of change effort over another. We think it's useful to keep the differences in mind by thinking of change in systems terms,** so that a curriculum adoption within one grade level, for example, is planned for in the context of how it might affect other grade levels, instructional methods, assessment of learning, and other parts of the educational universe. Not only does this allow you to gauge the "ripple effect" of your efforts, but also to calculate the significance of changes in different parts of the system.

What Do We Know About Educational Change?

Major reports over the last twenty years are nearly unanimous in concluding that most school improvement efforts are either abandoned over time or do not achieve their intended goals. Yet new attempts at change of one sort or another continue unabated. Elmore and McLaughlin (1988) refer to it as "steady work":

> The history of American education is, in large part, the history of recurring cycles of reform. There is considerable disagreement over the meaning and effects of these cycles. Reform has historically had little effect on teaching and learning in the classrooms. In this pessimistic sense, educational reform is "steady work". That is, measured by substantial changes in what is taught and how, the rewards are puny; but the work is steady, because of the seemingly limitless supply of new ideas for how schools should be changed and no shortage of political and social pressure to force those ideas onto the political agenda. (p. v)

During the past decade, especially, there has been a proliferation of committees, commissions, panels, and task forces at work, from Presidential "summit meetings" to state and local initiatives, all directed at bringing about better education through the setting of national goals, legislation, regulation, and policy changes.

With so much happening why do changes seem impermanent, imperfect, and ineffective? In part, it's because so many attempts to change have little to do with students and teachers in classrooms. Instead, much of the emphasis has been on modification of such things as organizational and administrative structures, physical plants, and academic and vocational curriculum splits (Kantor, 1982; Tyack, 1974; Katz, 1971). Such changes assume that change is, or at least ought to be, a rational and systematic endeavor -- if analysis of the problem is pragmatic, and if practical applications and a foolproof plan are developed, then improved educational practices will result. In response to major issues like the Cold War, the Korean War, and the Sputnik launch, school improvement in the 50s and 60s was characterized by pragmatic analysis and practical applications, often put forth by researchers and theorists far removed from schools and classrooms. Their common purpose was to identify and to solve an ever increasing number of educational problems as quickly as possible, and by the early 70s there was a growing sense of urgency about this "professionalism of reform," about theorists unconnected to practitioners, and theories that neither derived from nor changed with practice. Some observers note that teachers often see themselves as persons who fashion practical applications out of theories wafting down from on high, resulting in a broad range of practices that may or may not respond to the theorists' original problem statements.

But the solution is not simply to get the theorists closer to classroom practices, because the more fundamental problem is that most school improvement projects are not wisely chosen to begin with. The two largest studies of school improvement in the last fifteen years -- The Rand Corporation Study of nearly 300 sites (Berman & McLaughlin, 1978), and The NETWORK's Dissemination Efforts Supporting School Improvement (DESSI) study of 60 innovations in more than 150 sites (Crandall & Loucks, 1983) -- found that most efforts are not chosen primarily for the benefit of students. Instead, more than half were initiated for opportunistic reasons -- either because of perceived career incentives for

the individuals responsible, or because funding for something beyond the regular budget was available.

At the same time, these reasons are not necessarily bad; indeed, a well-conceived new practice should enhance someone's career opportunities, and special funding probably is necessary if regular budgets are tightly drawn. But the sheer numbers of adoptions calls into question the efficacy of such choices: Why so many? To what larger end than one classroom or curriculum adoption, career opportunity, or extra funding? Is it intended as part of systemic change, or is it a practice that can be easily abandoned when the funding or interest runs out?

The balance of improvement efforts (less than half) are attributable to problem-solving ventures. But good intentions alone are not sufficient to bring about lasting change. So it was that in the late 1950s and early 60s there was a great deal of new funding for science and technology innovations; in the late 60s grants were widely available for open classrooms and other experimental programs and structures; and the 70s and 80s have emphasized innovations in special education and for at-risk youth programs. Elmore and McLaughlin (1988) observe that these kinds of "educational reform can occur on a massive scale without substantial effects on such fundamental aspects of schooling as conceptions of knowledge, teaching, and learning" (pp. 3-4).

What is missing? Why do we persist in repeating cycles of reform/failure/reform that should have been obvious long ago? In part, it has to do with how a change effort gets initiated, managed along the way, and finally becomes a permanent part of the organization. First, attention to implementation issues (like ongoing staff development and support, time to practice, and availability of resources) are more important to the success of a new program than initiation activities (awareness, start-up funds, initial training). Second, early and sustained attention to continuation activities are as critical as implementation activities to the long-term success of an innovation. In practice, however, it usually isn't done this way. In The NETWORK's DESSI study, researchers found that, on average, decision makers devoted 9.5 months to the initiation phase, and only 3.5 months to actually implement efforts. In other words, they spent three-quarters of a year deciding whether or not to adopt a new program, and only a third as much time in such activities as providing inservice training, securing resources, and rearranging class and staff schedules.

How Do People Change?

The evidence is clear that significant and lasting change means that innovation must ultimately be incorporated into a school system's ongoing structure and processes. We also know that few changes survive to that point. A major part of the reason lies in the fact that while educators have extensive training and experience in the **substance of change**, how to manage the **process of change** is not part of their professional repertoire. The implications of this distinction brings us to a discussion of how people respond to change and, through the Concern-Based Adoption Model, how you can monitor, evaluate, and design interventions that address their concerns.

Some participants in reform efforts will be willing volunteers, others will take more time to be convinced of the value, and a few will resist altogether. It's not enough for a change manager to attend closely to the trappings of the project -- to the funding, technologies to be employed, schedules for release time and training, and the like. The perceptions and feelings of people who will be affected, from the eager volunteers to the resistant skeptics, are real; moreover, their concerns are legitimate and predictable. As Fullan (1982) summarizes the issue,

> . . . real change, whether desired or not, whether imposed or voluntarily pursued, represents a serious personal and collective experience characterized by ambivalence and uncertainty, and if the change works out it can result in a sense of mastery, accomplishment, and professional growth. . . . The anxieties of uncertainty and the joys of mastery are central to the subjective meaning of change, and to success or failure -- facts which have not been recognized or appreciated in most attempts at reform. (p. 26)

The explicit message here and in other research (Marris, 1975; Schon, 1971) is that **change is a highly personal experience.** The second and equally critical message is that **change is a process, not an event** (Hall & Loucks, 1978). More often than not school board members, administrators, and even teachers assume that change is the automatic result of a legislative mandate, administrative decision, or curriculum revision. But the reality is that change takes time, and it is achieved only in stages.

The **Concerns-Based Adoption Model** (CBAM) (Hall & Loucks, 1978) describes the changing feelings of individuals (teachers, administrators, and others) as they learn about, prepare for, use, and refine new practices. **Initially, people have self-oriented concerns:** What is the new practice? How will it affect me? **When these concerns are resolved, concerns about managing the new practice dominate:** How do I do it? How can I keep it from taking so much time? When will I be able to anticipate all the surprises that seem to occur every day? Finally, **when the management tasks are mastered, concerns turn to the impact of the practice on students:** Are they learning? What can I do better?

The CBAM defines seven Stages of Concern (SoC). As illustrated in Figure 2.1, the stages generally flow from a focus on self, to task, to impact. There are several points to keep in mind about this developmental process. First, the fact that we all change developmentally does not mean that our progress is lock-step, or that all of us will make full journeys along the continuum of concerns. In part, this is because people can resist change, some of us temporarily and some for indeterminate periods, some for personal and some for professional reasons. If time, materials, or other support is inadequate, we may become preoccupied with management concerns; if it becomes apparent that the innovation's impact is less than satisfactory, we might begin thinking of abandoning the change or deviating from it dramatically.

Second, a person does not experience only one Stage of Concern at a time. Instead, we have some degree of feeling about all of the stages, with one or two of them dominating our feelings at any given time. Finally, something on the order of a bell curve emerges over time for a group of people involved in the same innovation -- for a program that has been fully (and well) implemented, the primary concerns of most teachers will probably be in consequence and collaboration, with newer users at lower stages and a select few refocusing on major modifications.

Levels of Use (LoU) is the second major dimension of the CBAM. Levels of Use (Figure 2.2) measures eight distinct kinds of behaviors -- that is, what people actually do as they mature in the use of an innovation or new practice, from everyday activities like learning to cook or to drive, to complex innovations like teaching critical thinking skills. **Like concerns, use moves on a continuum, from three levels of non-use, to as many as five levels of actual use** of an innovation. Each of the eight Levels of

Figure 2.1

STAGES OF CONCERN

	STAGES OF CONCERN		EXPRESSIONS OF CONCERN
IMPACT	6	REFOCUSING	I have some ideas about something that would work even better.
	5	COLLABORATION	How can I relate what I am doing to what others are doing?
	4	CONSEQUENCE	How is my use affecting kids? How can I refine it to have more impact?
TASK	3	MANAGEMENT	I seem to be spending all my time getting materials ready.
SELF	2	PERSONAL	How will using it affect me?
	1	INFORMATIONAL	I would like to know more about it.
	0	AWARENESS	I am not concerned about it.

(Adapted from Hord et al., 1987.)

Use focuses on behavior that is characteristic of the user at a particular point in their development. For example, at LoU II, Preparation, the person is preparing for first use through such activities as gathering resources, finding out detailed requirements, arranging the physical setting, and scheduling initial steps for actual use; when the person begins using the innovation for the first time, behavior is usually at Level III, Mechanical, characterized by close attention to day-to-day management issues, step-by-step attempts to master the tasks at hand, and with little time for reflection about long term outcomes.

Remember too the RAND and NETWORK findings, and what it takes to fully implement innovations. In terms of the progress people make in moving through the Stages of Concern, don't expect them to focus on impact concerns until they have had plenty of time and opportunities to practice and master new skills. Bruce Joyce has observed that change is technically simple and socially complex. At some point your ideas about

a new practice get translated into written plans and procedures and timetables and lists of resources. But the people involved -- teachers, administrators, students, parents -- cannot be reduced to paper. Working with them can be messy, complicated, aggravating, frustrating, enervating . . . in short, challenging. It can also be exciting, gratifying, and invigorating -- all the more so if close attention is paid to anticipating, planning for, and responding to the predictable and legitimate concerns people making the change will experience.

Figure 2.2

LEVELS OF USE

LEVELS OF USE		TYPICAL BEHAVIORS
VI	RENEWAL	Seeks more effective alternatives to the established use of the innovation.
V	INTEGRATION	Makes deliberate efforts to coordinate with others in using the innovation.
IVB	REFINEMENT	Assesses impact and makes changes to increase it.
IVA	ROUTINE	Has established a pattern of use and is making few if any changes.
III	MECHANICAL USE	Is poorly coordinated, making changes to better organize use of the innovation.
II	PREPARATION	Prepares to use the innovation.
I	ORIENTATION	Seeks information about the innovation.
0	NONUSE	Takes no action with respect to the innovation.

(Adapted from Hord et al., 1987.)

Chapter 3:

Starting an Improvement Project

You've decided to begin thinking seriously about an improvement effort in your school. The idea may have emerged from a district or board priority, from a group of teachers in a building, or it may be your own initiative. It might involve whole language skills in early elementary grades, or it might be as diffuse and complex as a districtwide restructuring effort. Whichever description fits, the way you begin is important, and a "plan for planning" is what this chapter is about. In the final section of this chapter are some examples of how the tasks described below fit into the experience of rural schools.

The effort you are undertaking will need to have legitimacy in the district or school. Even if you are taking on an informal task, it's helpful to think of it as a project. In this chapter, we describe **preliminary tasks necessary to establish your project:**

- **Clarify your charge**
- **Negotiate for resources**
- **Build a base of relationships**
- **Consider using an outside consultant**
- **Form a school improvement team**

You may have already completed one or more of these tasks; we also assume that schools engage in improvement efforts with varying degrees of skill, capacity, and commitment from stakeholders. Regardless of where you find yourself on this continuum, we think it's helpful to think about these tasks in terms of what Michael Fullan (1991) calls the "three R's":

> **Ideally, the best beginnings combine the three R's of relevance, readiness, and resources. Relevance** includes the interaction of need, clarity of the innovation (and practitioners' understandings of it), and utility, or what it really has to offer teachers and students . . . **Readiness** involves the [school's] practical and conceptual capacity to initiate, develop, or adopt a given innovation . . . **Resources** concerns the accumulation of and provision of support as a part of the change process. Just because it is a good and pressing idea doesn't mean that the resources are available to carry it out. . . . We said "ideally" because it is not always possible to sort out the combination of relevance, readiness, and resources at the launch stage. It may be necessary to start on a small scale and use this as a leverage for further action. (pp. 63-4)

As you begin to consider the five steps in this context, bear in mind the Stages of Concern that we talked about in Chapter 2. If the new program is your idea, you've already addressed many of your own concerns -- you have heard about or thought of an idea, gotten more information about it, considered what it means for you personally, thought of ways that it could be managed, and your decision to move ahead means that you're satisfied that it's a worthwhile endeavor for students and teachers. In short, you're already a believer. But others may not be. They will need time, attention, and information to get to the same point you've reached.

This is **the beginning of the initiation phase,** and it's helpful to remember that you don't need to make irrevocable decisions as you work through the tasks described here. This is a time of exploration and negotiation, and while you'll be seeking some definite commitments and resources, you should also be thinking of what options can be left open for now.

Clarifying Your Charge

First, consider what kinds of outcomes would be acceptable to you and what role you want to play in reaching those outcomes. Then negotiate with the appropriate people in your school or district. A building administrator may have decided that a new program ought to start in her school, with herself serving as the on-site facilitator. The superintendent might think that the project should operate in every school in the district

and that the building administrator's role should be that of a planner and resource identifier. Both notions are acceptable, but they may also be incompatible. Don't assume that everyone understands the job requirements as you do. Find out what their assumptions are -- and their concerns -- and negotiate until you get a role that is acceptable to you and others.

As schools engage in more cross-cutting improvement efforts (cooperative learning and critical thinking skills, for example), there is a need for preliminary talks and negotiations with an ever wider range of stakeholders. For example, when we surveyed a group of Massachusetts superintendents about becoming involved in the Rural Initiative, thinking skills emerged as a common theme among them. After further consultation with building administrators, four sites were chosen. Finally, teachers became involved, either as volunteers, willing recruits, or draftees. But critical thinking skills was not the only priority for the teachers and administrators involved in the project. The new school year had its own inevitable array of new and old priorities for staff to juggle. In one school thinking skills went alongside four other new priorities for one of the teachers drafted into the project; for a teacher in a nearby town there were five new assignments she was assuming along with infusing thinking skills into her curriculum.

Negotiate for Resources

Resources include time, money, services, equipment, and space. Find out what might be available for the project. Money might be budgeted for a committee or project, or to pay for substitute teachers or travel. Time may be allocated to release you to work on this effort, or for teachers to be released from classes. Services could mean that a secretary can be assigned to perform clerical tasks or that an outside agency can be contracted for assistance. Our advice here is, "If you don't seek, you don't find."

Bear in mind that this is only your first look at possible resources. Later you will be looking for a much larger and more important set of resources to support the implementation effort. In this initiation step you are looking for resources to support the planning and management of the effort. Figure 3.1 is a partial list of the resources you might get for

your project. In the process of obtaining resources you will learn something about how much of a priority your project is, where some of the restraints are, and so on.

Figure 3.1

POSSIBLE RESOURCES

Money

- A budget for the team to use at its discretion
- Substitute teachers
- Materials
- Travel
- Conference fees
- Stipends for extra time
- Consultant work funds

Time (which, sometimes, is money)

- Release time for teachers
- Conference attendance, program visitation, etc.
- Inservice education
- Staff and board meetings
- Agreement to eliminate part of your job to take on this task
- Administrative support
- Committee meetings and other work

Services

- Secretarial help (typing minutes and letters, photocopying)
- Consultant or outside help (hired or free from a funded agency)
- Help from volunteers, parents, students

(Source: Loucks-Horsley & Hergert, 1985)

Build a Base of Relationships

In the process of negotiating for resources and clarifying your charge, it is quite natural that you'll also be trying to make friends and allies for your effort. You will likely meet first with the administrator above you who is overseeing the project. In very small districts, you may be **the** administrator, and your first discussions will likely be with board members and with teachers who might be affected.

Depending on the size of the district and the nature of the improvement you're considering, you may find yourself in new territory and a different set of relationships. You might want to know what other people's hopes are for the project, either generally or specifically. Someone may be responding to outside pressure -- from a parent group, for example. Your effort might be a "mission" for someone else, and other people may feel threatened by the effort or by your having responsibility for it. In these first informal meetings, some of them one-on-one and some with groups, you will be trying to describe your initial vision of the effort in ways that others can buy into it. You can also find out what is important to them; to discover what and whose purpose the project is serving and could serve. Sometimes those ideas and purposes can be incorporated; sometimes not. These are also opportunities to learn more about who is responsible for, and who has access to, which resources.

This is a time for building a base of support among administrators, teachers, and others who will be involved in implementing the changes. How you proceed will differ by your position in the district or school. Whatever your position, it makes sense to meet with the head of the local teachers' association and to talk informally with others who represent various opinions and role groups. In addition to getting people's initial reactions to the effort -- for, against, skeptical, etc. -- you will invariably learn more about the range of people in your district: who has expertise in the area, whose opinion is trusted by others, who is articulate and thoughtful about this topic or about past change efforts.

These initial meetings may seem time consuming or even unnecessary, especially since they are preliminary to the effort itself. Nevertheless, we strongly recommend that you make time for them. The conversations may be as short as 15 minutes each, and often they are informal. They should also be completed fairly quickly, not drag on for a month or more. In engaging others early on you will be accomplishing at least three important things. First, you will learn things that will help you manage this change effort; second, you will establish yourself as the person in charge; and third, you will convey the message that you care about the views of others in the district and consider them important to the effort's success.

Consider Using an Outside Consultant

Many school districts use outside consultants frequently; others, rarely. Our experience is that rural schools fall into a category closest to "rarely." At the risk of sounding self-serving (we are, in fact, outside consultants), we want to talk briefly about the value and uses of an outside consultant to help with the process.

Schools that are reluctant to use consultants tend to subscribe to one of the following lines of reasoning:

1. Consultants cost too much money to use on an ongoing basis. We'll bring someone in with expertise we don't have or if we hit a snag. Otherwise, we'll manage the effort ourselves.

2. Consultants are unnecessary, sometimes dangerous, and frequently they don't understand rural school environments. They have tightly drawn views of both the process and the solutions, and they will impose those ideas on us. Their ways of doing things usually slow us down, sometimes stir up internal trouble, and often seem condescending.

There are indeed elements of truth here. Consultants can be costly, especially if they have an ongoing presence in a school improvement effort. And we know full well that sometimes consultants are not particularly helpful! Like productive relationships within a district, the relationship between client and consultant depends in large part on establishing mutual trust and respect.

According to Loucks-Horsley and Hergert (1985), "The value of an outsider has to do with focused attention and with balance of power. An outside consultant will treat the job of planning and facilitating the effort as a job. The principal of a school will be busy meeting the everyday demands of the school and may give short shrift to this 'extra' effort. The everyday job of the consultant is to manage these kinds of efforts" (p. 5). So, if the effort is important and nobody has the additional time needed to manage the extra effort, consider using a consultant.

A consultant can also be crucial in achieving balance between power groups and in neutralizing competing factions. By definition, an outside consultant is not a part of the district's interest groups, has no alliances,

and will not have to "live" with people over the long haul. Thus, consultants have the best chance of being, and being perceived as, neutral and fair to the people involved and to their perspectives. They also usually have no power to gain or lose -- they should not, for example, be in line for a district job. Consider using an outside consultant when the situation is politically volatile or if the district is divided over a major issue.

Of course, many rural school improvement efforts are either small enough or straightforward enough to be managed by a district "change agent." Some rural school districts are large enough or dispersed enough that a central office person, depending on role and authority, can play an outsider's role in a school building.

Sometimes an outside consultant is subsidized by a government agency or by a special project and can work with you at little or no cost. That's precisely how we were able to provide support to many of the schools and districts in our rural schools demonstration sites.

Form a School Improvement Team

We strongly recommend establishing a multiconstituent school improvement team in order to ensure that various perspectives are included and that the effort has a broad base of support. It's true that a strong administrator with access to resources can sometimes initiate an effort without involving others in the planning. But the research on improvement and reform is also clear that the chances of achieving success and minimizing disruption are greater when representatives of key groups are involved in the process. Perhaps more important is the notion that school change does not occur in a vacuum, and even the most prescient administrator will find it difficult if not impossible to anticipate the impact of the inevitable ripple effect caused by the new program.

Your team should be relatively small (five to fifteen people) and be led initially either by the district person responsible for the effort or by an outside facilitator. Groups to be represented will vary from project to project and from district to district. At a minimum, the team should always include both administrators and teachers from the units that will be affected (elementary/secondary, special education/regular education, counselors, media specialists, etc.) and should also include people who

represent the variety of interests and experience present in your district. You should seriously consider involving parents, students, and community members on the team because they can offer valuable and different perspectives on the issues being addressed. The team should represent a balance of expertise on the content of the change as well as process skills that are needed, such as planning and problem solving.

The caution here has to do with size as much as composition of the team -- too few members means that important points of view are likely to be missed, and too many members causes serious problems for consensus decision making.

Your team members will represent a wide range of experiences, skills, beliefs, and concerns, and how a team functions is another critical dimension to managing the change process. Your team should include people who are open-minded, sensitive to the needs of the whole district, and capable of working well together. Even so, conflict in groups is inevitable, and you'll need to contend with real or imagined barriers between team members and the constituent groups they represent. Like the developmental pattern of concerns and behaviors in individuals, teams need time to mature. **Typically, teams go through four phases of development: forming, storming, norming, and performing** (School, Prouty, & Radcliffe, 1988; Yalom, 1985). While the phases may vary in intensity and duration, they do occur in a predictable sequence, and there are identifiable feelings and behaviors connected with each.

When teams are **forming,** members are dependent on a leader for initial direction, and they are likely to have strong concerns about clarifying the team's task. Until now, you've talked with people individually, and each of them comes to the team with some preconceived notions about the purpose of the project, their role in it, and their role as a team member. There will be some confusion, but this is also an important time for the group to achieve something, since team members may be more willing to please each other and the leaders now than they will be during the storming phase. And solid, immediate first achievements can be important building blocks to recall when progress is slowed down from time to time.

Control issues and concerns about vested interests emerge during the **storming** phase. Team members may form alliances around particular points of view and actively challenge leaders to further define and clarify

tasks and direction. It is helpful to look beyond their behaviors and immediate concerns, because members are likely asking such questions as: Am I going to like what I'll be doing? Can this leader handle us and all of our competing demands? Will my interest group be satisfied with the way I'm representing their views?

In **norming,** there is definite movement toward group cohesiveness. Team members develop a shared sense of purpose, and they are better able to communicate with each other about how they can best achieve their goals.

Time, patience, and tolerance for some ambiguity allows a team to move on to **performing.** When your team is performing well you will see far less dependence on formal leadership as members become comfortable taking their own initiatives with group goals in mind. As they do so, the burden of formal leadership and decision making is eased, and you can attend instead to facilitating the team's work and providing overall guidance to the school improvement effort.

Not only are these phases predictable, they also represent legitimate expressions of concern that need to be addressed if people are to be empowered to move on to other tasks and impact concerns. To that end, we believe that it's helpful to understand and put into practice **seven principles of effective teamwork** (Arbuckle & Murray, 1990):

1. Responsibility for the team must be shared by all members.
2. Decisions should always be agreed to by the team as a whole.
3. Full participation of all team members should be encouraged through the methods used.
4. The team needs to be flexible in order to accommodate differing points of view and styles of members.
5. Threats to individual members need to be reduced to a minimum, especially when teams are made up of people who have had little experience in working collaboratively with people representing other roles in the system.
6. The team's progress needs to be continually evaluated and discussed openly with the entire team.
7. Team members need to be conscious of the importance of their roles in the process.

A rural administrator who reviewed an early draft of this book expressed concern that practicing the seven principles could result in bland, compromised decisions. There is definitely the potential for "group think" outcomes. However, there are also techniques for achieving sound team decisions. True consensus, for example, does not mean that all team members are in 100% agreement with a decision; instead, consensus can mean that most people agree with a decision and that those in the minority agree not to sabotage the group's efforts during a trial period. Arbuckle and Murray's work offers several proven strategies for producing good group decisions, including a multiple-voting technique, a nominal group process, and a pyramid process. The pyramid process, for example, begins with individuals writing their own preferred outcome, then joining with one other person to write a joint version, pairs joining other pairs to develop an outcome acceptable to four people, and so on.

Having gone on at some length about the importance of managing a team effort, we feel compelled to raise the question, "Is the research conclusive about the need for a team?" No, it's not. Further, this is an issue that illustrates one of the underpinnings of this book: it takes many ingredients to make school improvement succeed. Not having a formal team can sometimes be compensated for by having a clearly perceived need, identifying a high-quality curriculum or instructional approach to meet that need, and a great deal of relevant and ongoing support for those who will have to put it into practice.

In and of themselves, teams cannot guarantee success. But they can go a long way toward democratizing the process, eliminating or alleviating initial stress and bad feelings that unilateral mandates can raise, and they can ensure that the range of perspectives that make up a school are considered. The key to deciding whether a project should be led by a team or individual has to do with the complexity of the effort. Besides, for many of you this is a moot issue: the size of many schools we've worked with in rural areas has been such that improvement efforts invariably involve all adults in the building.

Establishing the Project in the Context of Rural Schools

At this point you're probably asking lots of questions about how this rather general discussion of establishing the project plays out in rural school

settings. We have waited until now to introduce significant examples because this step requires simultaneous attention to a wide range of issues that rural schools have to contend with day in and day out -- competing priorities, scarce resources, lack of time, and the overall resistance to change that can come from a sense of being overwhelmed already with full-time job demands, let alone someone's idea for a new project.

All of these issues came to bear on a critical thinking skills project in western Massachusetts. In a K-6 school with 250 students, voluntary adoption of a critical thinking skills project was only one of several priorities for the administrator and four teachers involved in the project. For one teacher, it went alongside four other new priorities -- a math program in conjunction with a local college, a writing process for students, teacher contract negotiations, and her new position on the Library Committee. For another teacher, the list of new items included the math program, drug and alcohol education, learning American Sign Language, and becoming an officer of the Teachers' Association. It took more than four months for the outside consultant, a Regional Laboratory staff member, to achieve clarity with the teachers about expectations for and from them and for the participants to integrate all of their "priorities" into an already busy schedule.

In Roxbury, Vermont's K-6, 85-student school district, time and competing priorities were the least of teacher concerns. The district's new head teacher and four classroom teachers all welcomed assistance from The Regional Laboratory in identifying and carrying out a school improvement project, but they were unable to reach consensus after several meetings. As the Lab's two facilitators soon learned, the district had experienced too much change in recent years: the new head teacher was the fifth in five years, and the superintendency for the two-district supervisory union had changed hands six times in four years.

As the previous head teachers and superintendents had come and gone, so too had their many ideas for school improvement. In a system already fraught with change, one or more classroom teachers left the system each year. Those who remained when the Lab became involved had turned inward, concentrating their attention almost exclusively on their own classrooms and students.

The net result was that school staff clearly recognized the need for significant changes, but most were reluctant to commit to yet another school improvement effort that might disappear quickly. Compounding their reluctance was their perception of community attitudes toward the school and schooling. In a community of 560 or so residents, the school is the only public building in the village; doubled in size five years earlier, 85 students had already proven to be too many for the building. Community members were thought to be highly critical of school staff and skeptical of any further changes that might be attempted.

After talking about these issues, the faculty and outside consultants agreed that no lasting progress was likely to occur unless the community was involved in planning and decision making. Thus, Roxbury embarked on a strategic planning process that engaged faculty, the three-member school board, the parent-teacher association, and other members of the community. During a series of community coffee hours held in private homes, one faculty and one board member at each informal session presented some basic demographic data and projections to community residents and then asked for their comments, suggestions, and concerns about education in Roxbury. A list of nearly two hundred items was generated, then distilled into about a half-dozen major categories. Priorities were identified from the condensed lists, and the faculty learned, among other things, that some of their own priorities for school change were represented on the list. Once faculty recognized that the community had a vested interest in certain kinds of school change they were able to move forward with a confidence that had been missing during the years of turmoil and turnover. Now into the third year of strategic planning and specific school improvements, there has been no further turnover in staff, and the head teacher's position has been upgraded to a position that is half-time teaching and half-time as school principal.

We use the Roxbury example to underscore a critical point: contrary to a commonly held belief, rural schools may sometimes encounter **more** resistance to change, rather than less, precisely because of their size and relationship to their communities. Like Roxbury, many rural schools find themselves the focal point of community interest and concerns -- New England town meetings, for example, are held just once a year, but schools are in session and building staff highly visible from September through June. We believe that urban and suburban schools have much to learn from the dynamics of school improvement in rural schools because the

experience in a community like Roxbury serves to isolate and intensify primary issues about both the substance and process of change.

Author Talk

Horsley: *I work on team building issues with rural and nonrural groups, and I think I tend to focus on the generic aspects of teamwork. Now that we've agreed on the text for this chapter, do you have some final thoughts that will underscore teamwork in rural settings?*

Terry: *My sense of teams in rural schools is that they need the same kind of attention as in other schools. Often teachers are close in a social sense, but have little experience in working in a high performing team around professional issues. Thus, they need to become aware of how teams function, and the roles that need to be filled. We also emphasize throughout this book that involvement of the community is important, and this gives another reason to focus on team building. The tricky part for me has always been choosing who is on the team, especially from the community. As a superintendent, I always felt that involving those who showed initial skepticism was, in the long run, a plus. I recall trying to bring Whole Language into one district. I met with a group of people every Friday for breakfast at a local restaurant, partly for socializing, partly to answer questions, and partly to connect them to the overall picture. I also came to see the breakfasts as an opportunity to give positive feedback to the Whole Language Committee on a regular basis.*

There is still another issue I ponder often as I try to bring theory to bear on real life in rural schools. In this chapter and the previous one we've describes stages that both teams and individuals go through. I wonder how school leaders can use both of these frameworks as they work closely with others. I think a nagging question for lots of people is, "What's the difference? How do you pay attention to both individuals and teams?"

Horsley: *There will always be notable differences among people you're working with. But it's helpful to think of teams as aggregates of individuals, and that the developmental pattern teams go through parallels individual stages of concern. Forming is essentially the same as awareness and*

information concerns, storming is largely about personal concerns, norming centers on management concerns, and performing is all about impact. Attending to the developmental nature of concerns and phases -- letting people know, for example, that you fully expect some doubts and conflicts to surface -- can go a long way toward freeing up people to engage with the task you've presented to them.

Chapter 4:

Assessing and Goal Setting

One of the early steps in any change effort is assessment. While we maintain that assessment can consume too much time and emphasis, we also recognize the importance of knowing where you are at the start. Typically, schools engage in "needs" assessment, but we believe that starting with both needs and strengths is more useful than starting with needs alone. While "need" is often the catalyst for change, we also believe that assessment should identify points of leverage, what should be enhanced or retained -- i.e., strengths to build on -- as well as what ought to be changed.

It is especially important to identify strengths if your school or district is engaged in fundamental reform. The challenge of fundamental reform is large and complex, for it is far more than a collection of discrete school improvement efforts. The process familiar to most of us is to adopt systematic plans and procedures to address problems -- issues are isolated and identified, and we employ methods that attempt to control for all of the variables. Too often, however, the problem persists in ways that we hadn't anticipated and, inevitably, problems elsewhere in the system emerge and demand attention.

Recognizing this condition led the Roxbury Community School to engage in strategic planning with its community. We recommend that if your focus is broad and will encompass a range of school improvement efforts over time, you too employ a strategic planning process. Assessment and goal setting in this broad context can best be addressed through clarifying organizational beliefs and values (defining what is important in your schools and community), and by creating a knowledge base for planning and change (helping participants to learn more about what is needed and why). Our essential message is that fundamental reform cannot be initiated in a vacuum, nor can the process be so rigidly conceived that unanticipated changes in the future will cause an entire effort or major pieces of it to be discontinued. The components of fundamental reform

need to be revisited from time to time. This requires a built-in capacity for reflection, realignment of priorities and resources based on changing conditions, and renewal of your system's commitment to reform.

If you choose to start with a need or problem, be careful of how you define it. Educators who are asked to define needs for smaller scale improvements frequently do so either in general terms ("Children today need to learn about technology") or in terms of a solution ("We need programs for gifted and talented children"). As paradoxical as it first sounds, it's important to define the need both more carefully and more openly in order to allow for a wider range of solutions. For example, the needs of gifted and talented children can be met by a range of solutions, from a separate school for the academically talented to individualized instruction in every classroom to enhancing curriculum through infusion of thinking skills. Any one of these solutions might elicit gasps of dismay from people in the district who have already determined "the" solution to the problem. Carefully defining a problem at the start can be difficult, tedious, and time consuming, but it should lead to much broader satisfaction with the chosen resolution, as well as opening up a wider range of possible solutions. Figure 4.1 is an example of what one school did to define a problem in their language arts curriculum.

You may choose to begin by assessing the strengths of your school district or community. By determining the strengths of your school or district and what accomplishments or values are important to people, you may be able to begin on an upbeat note that will infuse the entire improvement effort. For example, you may have started a successful writing program, which you could expand. Or there may be some teachers who have become interested in cooperative learning and are ready to become trainers. Community resources -- such as businesses, environmental groups, colleges -- are other sources of strengths in addition to school programs and staff interests and expertise.

Our preference as we said earlier is to collect information on both needs and strengths. In strategic planning terms, this is called **internal scanning.** The purpose is to take a value-free look at what is actually happening in the school or district and to explore both strengths and weaknesses. Rather than assign blame for weaknesses or past failures, the point of internal scanning is to objectively analyze the issue, to underscore its strengths, and to prioritize areas that need work. Accomplishing this

Figure 4.1

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Kind of Problem

- Elementary Language Arts: Students do not value reading and writing, do not have enough experience of either.

Who is Affected

- Students
  - Read books only when assigned
  - Writing samples are very short and unimaginative
  - Comprehension scores on CATs are poor
  - Skills "mastered" when taught are not used in writing; transfer is poor. Example: Punctuation is correct on test but later used incorrectly in written work.
- Teachers
  - Frustrated by students' attitude toward language
  - Experience difficulty in motivating students
  - Language skills taught are not integrated into a meaningful whole

Evidence

- CAT scores, especially in reading comprehension, are lower than other schools in the system
- Teacher review of writing samples
- Survey of students on books read independently
- Interviews of students

Causes

- TV watching uncontrolled
- Lack of time in class to write (teacher perception)
- Lack of family and community role models who read

Goals for Improvement

- Students read more books
- Students write more frequently
- Students begin to enjoy/see value in reading and writing
- Students' writing becomes longer, more expressive, and more meaningful to them
- Teachers learn how to integrate skills better
- Teachers have better motivational techniques
- Teachers include more writing assignments (not just during language arts, but social studies, etc.)
- Parents are involved in encouraging students to read, limiting TV watching

purpose is easier said than done, and a note of caution is in order. Whether you call it assessment or internal scanning, the process is more than a paper review or prolonged discussion about what in the system works and what doesn't. The people involved in it will come to the exercise with their own frames of reference and strong points of view -- your challenge is to create enough dissonance that they are forced to examine their own and others' points of view from different perspectives. Without dissonance, there is a strong possibility that, in practice, your improvement project will suffer from a phenomenon known as the "near occasion of change," in which people and departments claim to have changed their behaviors but in fact have only adapted parts of an innovation to fit their previously held notions of how things ought to be.

The first step in defining any issue is to collect data about it. You or team members will determine what types of information you need. Do not limit the data you collect to numbers and test scores. Other data sources include teacher assessments of student performance and indicators like writing samples or books read. Data sources also include surveys or interviews of parents, teachers, students, and community members. The perceptions of these groups may be more of an issue than actual student achievement indicators. If so, you will need to find or generate data about these perceptions.

After determining your information needs, you must decide where data can be obtained. Standardized test results are always available, and sometimes prior assessment reports have been done by the district or state; community assessments and reports may also be available. While you can certainly gather new information, it is helpful to build on what is already available. Deciding where to collect data involves more than finding out what information is available but also identifying all of the groups that can be valuable data resources. In addition to teachers, students, and parents, consider board members, community agencies, employers, and state department of education personnel.

After identifying sources of data the next step is to develop and carry out an assessment plan. Among the strategies to consider are interviews, surveys, classroom observations, and meetings of representative people. Decisions will need to be made about who are the best people to gather specific kinds of information. In some schools, for example, classroom observations might best be done by an objective outsider, while in other

schools, peer teachers who are trusted might get the best information. There are no universal rules for choosing the best people to collect the data; the decision really depends on the local situation. In addition to what data are needed, who will collect it, and how, your assessment plan should have a time line indicating when each type of information will be collected.

Once collected, you and your team must analyze the information. Having spun out a long list of sources and strategies, we urgently add another note of caution: be careful not to collect too much information -- your analysis tasks will be too great -- and to collect it in the most unobtrusive and positive ways possible. Any assessment has the potential for raising anxieties among those who are being assessed. As you compare your initial understanding of the situation with the data you have collected, be prepared to expand (or even change completely!) your initial ideas. Consider examining the data for differences based on sex, race, achievement level, and other variables that seem to make sense for your school and community. Often, when data are only looked at in total, we miss important problems. This was the case for years with math anxiety among females, a situation which went unnoticed as a problem until female participation rates in math and test scores were examined separately.

Design for Building a Shared Vision

However you label the assessment process, we believe there is one extremely important rule to follow: don't spend too much time on assessment. You may get caught up in, first, the sheer volume of information that's available and, second, the inertia of choosing among the many alternatives available in a rapidly changing world.

Besides, whatever you assess is sure to change. After all an entire student body changes in several years and school board composition can also change completely in the course of a few elections. We know of needs assessments and scanning processes that have taken two years to collect data, summarize feedback to various groups, clarify and revise, etc., etc., etc. The rationale is that they are "getting people on board" or "involving people in the process." We believe that's too long, and that there are better ways to involve people. By engaging in a protracted assessment process you run the risk of using up precious energy before you really get

started and of losing momentum along the way. **When there is a choice between planning and doing, choose the doing.** While the assessment and planning for a comprehensive school restructuring effort may take most of a school year, that time can include experimentation and other action. The assessment part of the strategic planning process in Roxbury was completed in less than three months; for a school improvement effort that's more narrowly defined, an assessment can take as little as four to six weeks to complete.

Once completed and analyzed, assessment results should be fed back to people in the district or school. Whether written or presented orally, the report should be concise, clearly substantiated, easily understood, and shared widely throughout the school community. Teachers, administrators, parents, and others should be asked to react to and revise this preliminary report so that a common understanding of the school's needs and strengths can be developed. It is important that the version of the report not be too polished or final-looking until reactions are incorporated. Your team may serve this function initially, but you should also plan to check the initial assessment results with the various interest groups within the school, district, or community. Your final assessment report should reflect widespread understandings and the opinions of many.

Along with an assessment, developing a shared vision of the future may be energizing. Indeed, some projects work on developing such a shared vision first. A shared vision provides an image of what you are trying to achieve and where you want to go.

Now is also the time to set goals for the improvement effort (see Figure 4.2). Loucks-Horsley and Hergert (1985) suggest that

> Goals should capture a description of what success would look like when the improvement effort is in full and successful operation. In setting the goals, think about such questions as: What do you and other key people want to see changed as a result of this effort? What will be acceptable to you as measures of success? If you are initiating a revision of the science program, do you want to see improvement in students' scores on certain standardized tests or an increase in the number of students selecting advanced electives? It's important that the goals be both specific and attainable (p. 14).

Figure 4.2

IMAGINING SUCCESS
(Defining Goals and Expectations)

- Before setting any goals, ask yourself two questions:
  1. What knowledge, attitude, or behavioral changes do I want to see achieved by whom (students, teachers, parents)?
  2. What do I want my classroom, school, or district to look like when implementation is complete?
- To clarify your answer to the second question, imagine you visit your school in five years. What you see is a close-to-ideal version of the new activity. Now ask yourself:
  1. What is going on in the classroom?
  2. How is the room organized?
  3. What materials and equipment are available or in use?
  4. Who is working with whom?
  5. What are teachers doing?
  6. What are the students doing?
  7. What is going on school-wide?
  8. What is the administrator doing?
  9. Who else is present (e.g., parents, community, other agencies) and what are they doing?
  10. What additional activities are going on beyond the school walls that support what is happening in the school and classrooms?

A helpful organizer for assessment and goal setting is to **work outward from the center of the educational universe: children as learners.** Clarify what outcomes for young people your school improvement project is directed at. Are they the traditional ones (e.g., basic skills improvement), or have you stretched beyond (e.g., ability to think critically, make well informed decisions, work cooperatively)? Next, the assessment focus turns to teachers, to learn more about the kinds of instruction that will support the kinds of learning you value. Then to curriculum, materials, and

different kinds of administrative and professional support that teachers will need to carry out the kind of project you have in mind.

Author Talk

Terry: *You've worked with lots of different school sizes. Do you sense differences in the kinds of data that are currently available and useful?*

Horsley: *The same data apply -- it's just much harder for rural schools to get, largely because states seldom disaggregate data for them. Rural areas have the same problems with student standardized tests, demographic projections, and a sense of what skills are needed for the future. The latter is often projected as if the economy were an urban one with lots of service jobs, but the reality is that even the traditional jobs such as farming, mining, forestry, etc. are requiring more education, are hiring fewer people, and pay proportionately less. So students think more in terms of leaving rural communities for the "big city." I also think that it's harder to convince rural educators of the value of data precisely because it's so hard to access.*

Terry: *People in rural settings tend to mistrust data and to rely more on informal networks and "what I know." Such an approach may result in lots of untested assumptions. Use of techniques such as strategic planning and visioning can allow such assumptions to be tested and supported by data. One often overlooked source of local data is the town office; if cultivated it can be the source of lots of information.*

Chapter 5:

Identifying an Ideal Solution

By now you have determined the current state of affairs in your school, developed a shared sense of purpose about the need for a particular kind of change, and established some goals. Now the task is to identify the best way to achieve your goals. Identifying an ideal solution involves another kind of assessment and research, this time with a focus on local and external resources and constraints.

Identifying Local Resources and Constraints

Beginning with identification of local resources and constraints, the purpose is to recognize and build on what's good about your current program and staff and to balance these strengths against the availability of resources like time (for staff development and planning, for example) and money. In doing so, bear in mind that resources in a school system do not always equal money. For example, in the absence of funding for release time in several rural schools, arrangements were made for parent substitutes through the local PTOs. In addition to logistical resources and constraints, there may also be local political concerns, issues that provoke controversy in your community. We add this as another example of the need to attend to both the process and the content of change you are considering.

Developing Criteria for the Solution

Once the opportunities and constraints have been determined, you will need to decide whether to replace a program or practice entirely, find another to supplement what is already in place, or educate staff to be more effective. As you identify possible alternatives, you'll be confronted

with a wide range of options -- full-fledged programs, instructional practices, materials, processes, and ideas.

Whatever the issue, solutions for it come in many different forms. And before you lose your perspective -- seeing lots of trees but no forest -- it's important to take the time to develop your own criteria for selecting a solution, to decide what's important to you before seeing what is available in the forest of school improvement and reform.

So what are useful criteria for selecting solutions? Cost, of course, will be among the earliest criteria identified. In nearly every rural school with which we've worked, budgets have been tightly drawn, and line items for improvement efforts are rarely, if ever, included. When considering cost, it's important to remember our earlier discussion about the length of time it takes for innovations to be fully implemented, and the need to **plan for both start-up and ongoing expenses** for training and materials.

There are, however, less tangible and often more significant criteria to consider -- related to the system's goals, philosophies, and norms. These criteria are often difficult to articulate yet critical to success. They relate to a shared sense of vision and how it gets operationalized in different improvement efforts. For example, criteria related to curriculum and instruction include teaching style, instructional grouping patterns, types of materials, and student learning modes. The most important task here is to identify the preferred criteria and to make certain that people affected by the proposed changes agree on the definitions. Clarity and communication are the keys to identification of criteria: if only the superintendent and building principal have agreed on the criteria for selecting a new thinking skills program, as we saw happen in Massachusetts, the chances are slim that teachers will eagerly implement it; and if there are several different interpretations of what "whole language" means, it doesn't matter that everyone agrees that it is an important concept.

As you develop criteria you should also evaluate how the solution will fit in with the rest of the district. Does the new program involve a major or minor change? By whose standards? If the program's developer or promoter is not familiar with the scope and scale of rural schools, you and your team may need to reconfigure standard implementation requirements to fit your situation.

Like your earliest conversations with others in the system and analysis of assessment data, criteria that you develop now are not immutable. As you explore different resources and programs, your criteria may change. Criteria development should be seen as an evolving process that can benefit from ongoing cycles of reconsideration. Two sites we worked with in New York State provide good examples of the evolution of program ideas and criteria for them.

Bainbridge and Cochran are two of 14 sites in a state-funded program to develop community schools -- i.e., schools that collaborate with other service providers in order to serve the needs of all community residents, not just children, in a systemic way. When these community school projects began, they took their initial direction from state requirements and recommendations. Early on, however, they also established community advisory groups, conducted community needs assessments, and identified local priorities.

The critical difference between the programs in the two communities emerged during the first year as Bainbridge came to rely more and more on the advice of its advisory council, while project leaders in Cochran seemed more intent on molding needs assessment information to the form of their original plan. Now completing the second year of community schools programs, the Bainbridge project continues to grow and expand with widespread community support. At the same time, Cochran has cut back to its original pre-and post-school programs after failing to secure additional community support and resources to implement components of the original plan. In Cochran, then, original criteria were considered to be immutable, and preliminary community support dissolved when it became apparent that little consideration would be given to other community priorities.

Locating Outside Resources

There are far more sources for solutions to improvement needs than are typically used. The two main sources that educators usually rely on are commercial publishers and word of mouth. While worthwhile, these are not foolproof, and, even if well connected, educators who restrict themselves to these sources will be missing a great deal of good information. The fact is that billions of dollars of local, state, and federal

funds have been used to develop a wide range of exemplary curricular materials and instructional programs. Moreover, dissemination networks exist both nationally and in many states to allow schools to share different kinds of resources. The National Diffusion Network, for example, is supported by the U.S. Department of Education to make successful improvement programs available through a facilitator office located in each state and federal jurisdiction. Regional educational laboratories, university-based research and development centers, private agencies, and most state departments of education are also sources for identification of effective programs and practices.

The important thing is to broaden your research horizons so that you have a wide array of resources to consider. Further, we want to encourage the adoption or adaptation of existing programs and practices that have been proven to be worthwhile, for the more energy and resources you expend on developing your own unique program, the higher the cost will be. The research on school improvement is clear that teachers can and do use practices developed by others when 1) those practices can be clearly described and have evaluation data to support their effectiveness, 2) are a good fit for the school and district, and 3) are introduced with the kinds of training and ongoing support described in this book (Crandall & Associates, 1982; Berman & McLaughlin, 1978). Further, developing your own program can cost 20 times as much as adopting an existing program (Crandall & Associates, 1982). Put another way, if the "wheel" you need has already been invented, why spend the time and energy re-inventing it?

Making a Decision and Transforming It into a Definable Practice

Whatever the "wheel," how you finally decide on it is important for putting it into practice. In moving toward a decision, there should be checks on how the decision will be made. Are the people involved a decision-making or an advisory group? Will the superintendent make the final decision or abide by the group's choice? That is, who makes the decision? If it is the group, how they make the decision is equally important. Is consensus desired, or will there be a vote with a plurality decision?

Once made, the decision needs to be well publicized in ways that are appropriate to your school and district. If it is a staff decision, a presentation to the school board may be necessary or required; if the board has

been involved, then perhaps some other community forum or faculty presentation should be held. Whoever the audience, you will need to carefully describe both the chosen program and the process and reasons that led to its selection and issues for implementation.

That does not mean, however, that the new program has been fully defined as it will appear in practice. Here we are referring to answers to the following questions you'll need to ask: What happens in a classroom when the program is used? What are teachers doing? What are students doing? How are they interacting?

For programs developed and in place elsewhere, some of the questions are easy to answer. But this is less often the case for materials and equipment that may make up a large part of the solution. For these issues the question is, "What will teachers actually **do** with them?" Computers in the classroom represent a classic example. Research about "time on task" is another example of a solution that is often difficult to define in terms of teacher behavior. Outside developers and consultants, for example, should be pressed to answer a similar question: "When you have given us your message, what should teachers and others be doing?"

In the same way that you have developed commonly understood definitions of the problem, it is important to define the solution in terms of such things as classroom practice, organizational arrangements, and staff support. There are several ways to define and describe what is expected of teachers and others who use a new practice. For example, a Practice Profile (Loucks & Crandall, 1982) helps to clarify and summarize program components and requirements. The Practice Profile has two major parts that give everyone a clear, concise image of what a practice looks like and what is expected of them.

First, a component checklist specifies a manageable number of components (e.g., instructor's role, materials, etc.) that describe the practice in use. The checklist also prioritizes each component, describing how it is used in the most ideal way, ways that are acceptable (i.e., where the "wiggle room" is for teachers), and also ways in which the use or lack of use of a component is unacceptable. Figure 5.1 is an excerpt of a component checklist for the Connections Thinking Strategies program.

Figure 5.1

EXCERPT FROM COMPONENT CHECKLIST CONNECTIONS THINKING STRATEGIES*

Component: Instructional Activities

IDEAL --

- After the introductory lesson, teacher always integrates the strategy into the regularly scheduled lesson.
- Teacher uses language from the strategy poster and applies the standards for complete answers.
- Teacher begins all strategy applications with the "get ready" step and ends all applications with the "connect back" and "think about thinking" steps.
- Applications take 15-25minutes.

ACCEPTABLE --

- After the introductory lesson, teacher always applies the strategy to a topic the class is studying.
- Teacher refers to the strategy poster and modifies some of the language without changing the meaning.
- Same as "ideal".
- Applications take 30 minutes.

UNACCEPTABLE --

- After the introductory lesson, teacher applies the strategy to a topic unrelated to what the class is studying.
- Teacher uses a process and language different from that outlined on a strategy poster.
- Teacher does not include "get ready", "connect back", and "think about thinking" steps in every application.
- Applications take more than 30 minutes.

*"Connections" is a program developed by David Perkins of Harvard University and The Regional Laboratory for Educational Improvement of the Northeast and Islands. It is scheduled for publication by the end of 1991.

Figure 5.1 (cont.)

EXCERPT FROM COMPONENT CHECKLIST CONNECTIONS THINKING STRATEGIES

Component: Teacher-Student Interactions

IDEAL —

- Teacher prompts students to generate answers to "powerful questions"; prompts less over time.
- Teacher accepts answers and ideas without discussion of their merit; may ask for clarification.
- Strategy applications are split fairly evenly between teacher-led lessons and small group work.

ACCEPTABLE —

- Same as "ideal".
- Same as "ideal".
- Strategy applications include teacher-led ones and small group work; the two modes are not emphasized equally.

UNACCEPTABLE —

- Teacher does not encourage the generation of ideas or answers to "powerful questions"; does not change prompts over time according to students' grasp of the process.
- Teacher discusses merits of ideas and answers or judges them as to their merit.
- Strategy applications are all either teacher-led or small group work.

Second, there are implementation requirements which describe training, facilities, personnel, equipment, and other resources needed to implement the practice. By defining the new practice and what is needed to implement it, you will help everyone involved to know what to expect and what to look for. The practice can be monitored and evaluated using the Practice Profile, and needed modifications can be made.

Conclusion

The tasks involved in identifying an ideal solution do indeed require time and energy. For rural schools engaging in this step, there are both advantages and disadvantages. The workload of rural school educators comes to mind immediately -- simply, there are fewer people to do the same tasks that are required in larger school systems. A small school principal, for example, frequently wears multiple hats, serving simultaneously as the system's building principal, curriculum developer, staff developer, and business manager. On the other hand, rural schools have the advantage of working within a scaled-down bureaucratic system.

As the principal responsible for the community school project in Bainbridge and the head teacher in Roxbury learned, there are ways of -- and clear benefits from -- sharing decision making with others in their buildings and communities. Rather than go it alone, their success in identifying solutions came from seeking out and supporting the efforts of teachers and townspeople, all of whom have vested interests in their classrooms, schools, and communities.

Chapter 6:

Preparing for Implementation

As a clear image of your educational reform ideas begins to form, it's time to prepare to make them a reality. There are at least seven activities involved in preparing to implement your reform:

- Creating awareness
- Selecting implementors
- Assessing current practice
- Setting expectations
- Assigning support roles
- Making logistical arrangements (for training, materials, facilities, personnel)
- Creating a timeline of activities and events

There is no specific sequence to them, but they do need to result in a clear, shared idea of what's to come -- a map for "getting on with it." As you and your team consider each of these activities, you will become clearer on how to proceed.

Creating Awareness

As we have discussed before, a critical strategy for improving schools is to keep the important players informed of what you are doing as you proceed. Further, different people need to know different things at each step along the way.

Having chosen something to implement, ideally with the input of many others outside your planning team, it is time for you and the team to give others the same image as you have of the "what" and some indications of the "how." Going back to the CBAM, the questions asked by those outside the team (and many inside, as well), are self-oriented: What is it?

and How will it affect me? This is not the time to plunge into extensive how-to-do-it training or spend long sessions describing and illustrating the outcomes you expect will occur for students. Instead, short overview, descriptive sessions are called for, conducted by team members who can talk about what it will look like when in use (for example, teacher, student, and administrator roles, materials, new structures, timing).

In Brooklyn, Connecticut, a first grade teacher preparing to participate in a K-8 whole language initiative was understandably anxious about the prospect of changing her classroom practice: "When I first heard about it from the Lead Teacher, I thought 'Whole language -- oh, no, that's not for us.' But we weren't pushed. We had time to think about it. We were able to ask questions and try things out. If you can't do it well, I'd rather not do it at all."

Mind you, the kind of approach taken by the school improvement team in Brooklyn doesn't necessarily mean that an idea will be greeted with enthusiasm. Indeed, the more common experience of teachers in rural schools as far apart as Texas, Maine, New York, and Puerto Rico is to respond with skepticism to such awareness sessions because they have never before been asked for their concerns. An elementary teacher in Puerto Rico was asked how she heard about new things: "By smoke signal," she replied. The Puerto Rico project's technical assistance provider added that "it's not very easy for teachers to be convinced of the team's intentions because they've always been told what they're supposed to do and their concerns are never considered." The message here is that if your approach to involving teachers in school improvement is as new as the innovation itself, teachers will be confronting two changes simultaneously!

Sharing a list of components is a useful technique. Personal concerns are initially responded to by describing the timeline and logistics: when training will occur, when use will begin, and what the support structure is that will back them up. (We'll say more about expectations such as these later.) An opportunity to have questions answered rounds out a good overview session. These sessions can be conducted for groups of teachers, administrators, support people, and even for school board members, to keep them informed of progress and begin early to clarify some of the ways they will be expected to engage directly in or provide support for the

effort. Figure 6.1 describes some rural school examples of ways to create awareness of a new program.

Figure 6.1

VEHICLES FOR CREATING AWARENESS

- In a district implementing a strategic planning process, a slide-tape show was developed to give teachers, administrators, board members, parents, and community members an idea of how and why they needed to work together.
- In a school that had selected a new reading curriculum, an open house for parents gave improvement team members an opportunity to describe the new program and how it would be used.
- A school district adopting a computer-assisted writing program included an article in the district newsletter about a pilot teacher's success with it in the previous year.
- In a school working to improve its math program, members of the school improvement team held briefings for individual staff members to answer their questions and discuss the new program

Selecting Implementors

Early in this preparation phase, you will need to select staff to implement the program. You will need to decide whether implementation will be voluntary or mandatory and whether to begin the program in all classes or pilot test it during the first year in a limited number of classes. In making these decisions, there are pros and cons to be weighed carefully.

If voluntary, implementation can result in a divided staff, at odds over the new program. This can also increase the problem of articulation from grade level to grade level, especially if the power of a program cannot be seen for several years. On the other hand, mandatory implementation may set the teaching staff at odds with either the administration or the planning team. In part, this depends on the extent to which the process that led to selection of the specific change effort resulted in support strong enough to warrant involving all eligible teachers from the start or whether gradual phase-in would be better.

If your decision is to pilot the program in a limited number of classrooms, time limits should be set and criteria for effectiveness should be established. Also, selection of pilot teachers is an important issue. Volunteer teachers are likely to work hard but may not be representative of all teachers or grades for which the program is intended. On the other hand, random assignment by grade will provide information about the program at all the appropriate grades but may involve teachers who are not interested in the program. A good strategy is to go first with teachers who volunteer and then fill in (by persuasion, negotiation, and so forth) where grade levels, expertise, and other factors are not represented so that a comprehensive pilot test results.

Our advice comes straight from the Action Guide:

> **We suggest two things: First,** go with the energy; that is, take advantage of enthusiastic teachers by letting them be involved when the program is initiated. Their enthusiasm will often be what it takes to get the majority, the "wait and seers," to risk trying it. **Second,** encourage opinion leaders -- those teachers who others seem to respect, listen to, and go to for help -- to be early users. And try to involve the negative, but good, teachers by giving them an early role and some responsibility. Many times this overcomes their negativity, and their strength as teachers contributes much to the program (Loucks-Horsley & Hergert, 1985, p. 39).

Having made these suggestions, we also acknowledge just how small the pool of available implementors can be in some rural schools. When the Roxbury School principal talks of "3 out of 4 teachers" in his building and a principal in Magnolia, Arkansas, mentions "8 out of 10," their fractions and total numbers are one and the same. Thus, you may have far less choice than the preceding discussion on implementors seems to imply, and yours may or may not be a more difficult task. What happened in Brooklyn, Connecticut, discussed above, illustrates the best case scenario of effecting change with the implementors at hand -- a situation in which teachers' developmental stages of concerns and levels of use were acknowledged. Another small K-5 school in New England represents the opposite:

The school mandated a school-wide change and ultimately gave up on second grade involvement. The school's only second grade teacher represented the extreme *adopter type* of true resistance to change; she simply could not be convinced through information or the power of the principal's office to adopt a new practice. The principal, a relative newcomer (less than two years in the district) and only the second principal in the school's thirty-plus year history, finally decided that her energies were being drained by the effort to impose the mandate schoolwide. The principal concluded that history and deeply ingrained habits would not only lead to more conflict, but would also adversely affect the second graders whose teacher had taught the second grade since the school opened in the 1950s and who lived alone with her mother who had taught second grade in the same village for another thirty years before her.

Assessing Current Practice

Consider this experience: A school has chosen to implement Connections, a program to infuse the teaching of higher order thinking skills into the curriculum. (Excerpts from the Connections program component checklist were included in the last chapter.) Connections provides teachers with strategies for specific thinking skills such as decision making and problem solving. Teachers are required to make their own decisions about which strategies to use with which curriculum unit, to plan how to use the strategy to enrich the curriculum, to teach the strategy to students, and to manage students in small cooperative learning groups.

When Connections is first introduced to schools, teachers generally differ in their abilities to handle various aspects of the program. One teacher may have been using thinking skills with students, but may never have worked with students in small groups. Another teacher may have been trained and become expert with using cooperative learning groups, but may never have asked students to do sophisticated thinking about curriculum content. Still other teachers may not be comfortable making changes in the curriculum to the extent that Connections requires -- they worry that they will not complete the units on time.

Assessing where teachers are in relation to the different components of Connections or any new approach is critical to providing the best

assistance to teachers and to successful implementation. Workshops and individual help will be more effective when you know what current practice is, as it relates to the components of the practice you are introducing.

Common sense, as well as research, indicates the importance of assessing the current practice of each implementor with respect to the components of the new program. Using the component checklist described in the previous chapter can help. Once that is known, more relevant staff development and support can be planned.

Setting Expectations

Whether implementation of the change is voluntary or mandatory, it is critical that the team be clear about its expectations and standards for the effort. You may be the school or central office administrator who has the authority to back up the team's decision, or that person may serve on the team. Otherwise, you will need the support of appropriate administrators -- the principal, curriculum director, and so forth -- to set clear expectations, including:

- Sticking with the new program for a specified amount of time to ensure a fair trial period.

- Holding back from making major adaptations, especially easing standards too early; otherwise, you will be observing the "near occasion of change" phenomenon in action. During the trial period, fidelity to the program that was decided upon is an important expectation; only after mastering the program, understanding how it works and how it can work better for students, should teachers be encouraged to make changes to suit their individual situations.

- Putting in the extra time needed to practice new skills, prepare new materials, and so forth.

In the best of situations, expectations are set by your team and will have the full backing of administrators (some of whom serve on the team), and there will be full understanding and "buy in" of the staff to be involved.

Making Logistical Arrangements

Implementation of new practices often requires lots of new things: sets of materials, new structures, facilities (e.g., classrooms, labs, outdoor spaces), and sometimes new kinds of personnel, such as aides, bilingual teachers, and lab technicians. In addition, some new practices will require rearranging the routines of both teachers and administrators. For example, new practices sometimes call for more time spent on a certain content area, more teacher time for planning, serving on collaborative teams, more flexible classroom space, or different teacher-student ratios. You will need to identify all logistical arrangements and rearrangements that need to be made during the planning phase and then make sure that it becomes an ongoing task for the project's coordinator. (See Figure 6.2 for some of the resources that may now be called for.)

A logistical crisis in Bainbridge, New York, for example, was converted into a positive experience for the school and the community. Plans to construct a temporary building to house a pre-school program came to a halt when the New York State Education Department informed school officials that the new facility could not be built without approval through a town referendum, a public vote that could not be held for about six months after the scheduled start of the new program. Staff had already been hired and children enrolled.

Rather than wait for bureaucratic and legal approval, the elementary principal and the community schools coordinator opted to start the program in the community in the meantime. The pre-school staff trained and supervised a small group of parents in providing pre-school functions in private homes until the building was operational. Bainbridge officials are convinced that they learned a great deal about pre-school needs in the community, and that the referendum eventually passed because of greater community awareness of the value of the pre-school program. The principal concluded that "the building would never have been approved if we'd put the program on hold until after the vote -- taking it into homes demonstrated just how important we thought it was, and the town responded to that."

Staff development is another item to arrange. First, think about the type and extent of staff development needed. Your assessment of current practice will enable you to answer the question, "Do teachers and others

need only orientation to new materials, or do they need extensive training in new behaviors and strategies?" This will help you decide if you should plan for an afternoon inservice or for a series of one-day workshops with extensive coaching in between.

Timing of staff development is also important and has some obvious financial implications. Depending on the time and money available and the amount of staff development needed, you may want to sponsor a summer workshop, an after-school course during the school year, or a series of ongoing seminars during the implementation period. Staff development during the school year usually involves the expense of substitutes, and it may be difficult to find enough substitutes if you need to involve a large number of teachers. If you have the flexibility, this is where a good relationship with your PTO can be very helpful. Staff development during the summer may require teacher stipends that can be more costly than substitute pay. And an additional benefit of staff development during the school year is that it permits participants to quickly put their learnings to use.

Figure 6.2

POSSIBLE RESOURCES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Money or In-Kind Resources for:

- Trainers – initial and follow up
- Substitutes or teacher stipends for staff development
- Planning, meetings
- Materials
- Support personnel (coordinator, aides)
- Travel
- Equipment
- Evaluation

Time for:

- Information sharing
- Training – initial and follow up
- Support group meetings
- Administrative support, coordination
- Team meetings

(Source: Loucks-Horsley & Hergert, 1985)

Staff development should be conducted by people who are totally familiar with the new program, who are experienced trainers, and who understand principles of adult learning (Crandall, 1983). They could be the developers or representatives of the program, or they could be teachers or administrators who have worked with the new program in your or other districts. Before training starts, you should clarify several issues with the trainer: determine what will be presented, share with the trainer the staff's present skills and needs, and identify needs that will not be covered during the training. For instance, the trainer may provide teachers with extensive information about the program materials and teaching approaches but may not be able to help them fit the program into their curriculum. Advance knowledge of such information allows the planning team to compensate.

It is usually worthwhile to conduct training in increments: two or three sessions one or two months apart. This allows teachers to learn a number of new strategies or curriculum units, try them, then come back for debriefing and additional training. Spreading out the training keeps management concerns at a low level because teachers don't feel compelled to master everything at once, and they know they'll have an opportunity to share their problems and successes (Loucks & Pratt, 1979). When initial training is being scheduled, plans for follow-up training should also be developed. By doing so, you will ensure that funds are earmarked for follow-up training, and you will be providing an important source of support for teachers who are implementing the program -- the promise of future expert help. The norm is for teachers to see consultants come into their district, present a new way of doing things that disrupts routines, and then ride off into the sunset, never to be heard from again. This time, we believe, things will be very different: the trainer, or another person with comparable expertise, will be scheduled to return to answer questions, help solve problems, and provide the next level of training. Follow-up training can mean the difference between successful implementation and no implementation at all.

Assigning Support Roles

One thing that we have learned well is that teachers need a wide range of ongoing support to successfully implement a new program and to integrate it into their teaching. This is also true of non-teaching innovations. Among these support needs are in-person assistance, material support,

leadership, and moral support. To provide all of this, non-teaching staff must be involved with the program.

Figure 6.3 lists a large number of support functions that need to be carried out in the implementation of a new program (Loucks-Horsley & Cox, 1984). You might designate one person as the project coordinator -- someone who is given the time and resources to help teachers and "run interference" for them, especially at the beginning of the program. Or you may divide up the functions among several people, depending on your size and resources: enthusiastic and responsible teachers, principals, department chairs, central office staff members, external consultants, even parents and community members. If several people are involved, you or another person will need to "orchestrate" all of the moving parts. Whether a coordinator with many roles, or charged with "orchestrating" others in their support of teachers, this person is crucial to your project's success.

No matter how the support functions are divided, you need to pay special attention to several of them in preparing for implementation. New programs often collapse because someone decides that all anyone needs is a basic workshop to learn some new skills. As you'll recall from our discussion in Chapter 2 of what makes for good change, we now know the importance of follow-up assistance that addresses the specific problems (often about management issues) that participants have after initial training. Demonstrations, coaching, problem-solving sessions, informal observations, and feedback -- these are the kinds of support that will be needed in the early part of implementation. (More about these in the next chapter.)

Yes, specific content-related help is important. But equally important is moral support. This might be as informal as a casual word of encouragement. Ideally, moral support is incorporated into a formal statement from the trainer and/or administrator that everyone knows change will not be easy, that it is okay to make mistakes, and that help will be there when it is needed. Referring back to the CBAM once again, this is a time when personal and management concerns are highest. As was done in Brooklyn, Connecticut, whatever you can do to assuage such concerns will be most appreciated during a time when teachers feel pressed by the everyday demands of teaching as well as having to master a new program. Yet, encouragement is not a technical skill that administrators

Figure 6.3

NECESSARY FUNCTIONS FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Assessing needs, strengths, and resources
Assessing current practice
Setting clear goals, objectives, and expectations
Selecting or developing a new practice
Creating awareness
Assigning roles and responsibilities
Establishing commitment
Developing game plans
Allocating resources
Providing materials
Arranging training
Making schedule and organizational changes in school
Helping teachers plan implementation
Initial training
Problem solving and trouble-shooting
Providing follow-up training
Monitoring classrooms for use
Evaluating implementation outcomes
Evaluating ultimate outcomes
Training new or reassigned staff
Conducting follow-up and refresher sessions
Incorporating program into curriculum guidelines
Routinely purchasing new materials and supplies
Establishing a budget line item

(Source: Loucks-Horsley and Cox, 1984.)

and support staff learn about in their preparation programs nor do they give it frequently enough.

Leadership is rarely placed in the category of "support", but it is clearly part of an effective support system. One of the ways leadership functions as support is in clarifying goals and expectations. Another is in monitoring progress toward goals; the operative word here is "monitoring," not "evaluating," for this is a time for support without critical judgments of performance. Reminding people that the program is a priority and that everyone is expected to participate (or, at the least, to suspend disbelief) is a function that sometimes is forgotten after implementation begins. Similarly, many people require a "nudge" to engage in something new, and this is a function that only people in leadership roles can play. Support systems built on mandates do work, but only if the practices they support make sense to teachers and result in student learning that is clearly visible to them. Teacher behaviors, in this case, change before attitudes, and this

is all the more reason to work toward balancing moral support and firm leadership. If the change you seek is a good one, then even the most reluctant teacher will be grateful for the initial push.

Creating a Timeline

Preparing for implementation takes a lot of time, and it is easy to forget that actual implementation will take even more time. Because we have an understanding of how change occurs, and the stages that people and teams go through as they become familiar with and implement a new program or practice, we can create realistic timelines with important milestones.

In Chapter 2 we talked about how long it typically takes to effect significant change -- three to five years from its initiation to the point at which it becomes truly incorporated into the ongoing life of a school and its classrooms. One half to a full school year can easily be spent in planning and preparing activities. During that time the focus will include mastering the practice, perhaps by a limited number of teachers, and on establishing the support system needed to sustain it. The second and succeeding years will likely involve spreading the practice to other teachers, monitoring and analyzing how things are working in early implementors' classrooms, and refining. During that time also, the structures necessary for incorporation of individual programs are built, as are procedures to ensure continuation of large scale reform efforts.

Author Talk

Terry: *There is a commonly accepted myth that people in rural schools are, by nature, resistant to change. How do you respond to that?*

Horsley: *We've made brief mention of "adopter types," research that has shown that people have predisposed responses to change. There are innovators, leaders, early and late majority, and resisters. A profile of a cross-section of people usually looks like a bell-shaped curve -- most people near the middle, and very few true innovators and resisters. Now, to explode the myth: the original research sample consisted of rural folks, farmers in the Midwest, and why and when they adopted new strains of hybrid corn!*

The point I want to emphasize is that true resisters represent only a very small percentage of people. Attending to everyone's informational and personal concerns early goes a long way toward separating out the hesitant, skeptical, and unconfident, from those who won't buy in no matter what you say or do It's also very helpful to try and recruit experienced, respected teachers to be among the first users because they often influence more reluctant ones to come along.

Herbert: *I get concerned when people who oppose an innovation are labelled "resistant" too quickly. They may have genuine philosophical or values differences with the innovation, or they may not want to be involved at this particular time because of personal or professional circumstances. (Ask yourself, "What would cause me to act that way?" and you'll probably come up with some very legitimate reasons.) Care should be taken to try to understand each individual who "resists" and to treat each with respect. Be creative about giving people information, time, and various kinds of learning experiences.*

Terry: *My experience is that not everyone will come on board immediately. Rather than openly mandate the change, let pressure build from peers, and sometimes parents, to make the change across the board. Another approach is to consider with the staff alternative ways of having the benefit reach the students, e.g., different assignments of teachers, sharing of students, use of volunteers. The key for me is not to spend a whole lot of extra energy trying to get the marginal folks on board, although, in the back of my head is the knowledge that if the program works and becomes part of "what we do here" then a mandate may become necessary. So far, in my experience, I've never been pushed to that point.*

Chapter 7:

Implementing the Project

By now you've done all the planning and preparing, and it seems that all that is left is the doing! As your change effort is put into the hands of the implementors -- teachers and others who will have to live with it on a day-to-day basis -- your active role diminishes. Compared to the frenetic activity that goes with orchestrating a planning team and initial training, you may find it disconcerting to sit back, observe, and keep your "hands off" while the real users put their "hands on." (Unless, of course, you're one of the implementors!)

In Chapter 2 we cited research on the average time decision makers devote to initiation (the subject of Chapters 3-6) and the amount of time usually devoted to implementation -- nine or so months to think about the change and plan for it, and about two and a half months to implement it.

You may spend, in contrast, two or three months planning a specific school improvement effort or nine months to a year developing a shared vision for large scale school restructuring. That's okay. Done well, your plan will guide you to some key functions to be performed during a realistic implementation period. But be sure to plan on one or two years to allow implementation to really take root. We now know that it is absurd to expect immediate mastery by teachers, let alone changes in student learning that can be evaluated by the end of the first year.

As a rural teacher told us, "You don't pull the vegetables up every week to see how they're growing." If the change seems rough for a good part of the year, you may even see a time when kids learn even less than with the previous practice. If the new program is a good one for your setting, you *should* expect increased learning, but *not* necessarily in the first year. As we note in the final chapter, by all means, ask if the practice is implemented and how it's going the first year. But save an assessment of its impact on students until later.

We recently conducted the first year evaluation of what was to be a multi-year project to raise student and community aspirations in a Northeastern state. The project sponsors and community participants in seven sites understood that measurable results -- like more young people going on to post-secondary education and increased community support for and involvement in education -- were several years away. But the corporation funding the evaluation did not see it that way: since there was no observable student impact after one year, the corporation cancelled both the evaluation effort and the technical assistance services directed at organizational and team development for participating communities.

Schools, communities, and others making change need time and support, especially at the beginning. **First, bear in mind that most concerns will be about *management* issues.** The primary question asked will be, "How can I get this practice under control (so I can avoid going crazy)?" There are ways to recognize these management concerns. Expect rough going: poor coordination, lack of anticipation of what will come next, and settings that appear (and often are!) out of control. Few of us are perfectly coordinated and can plan ahead successfully when we are first engaged in something significantly different. Accompanying these difficult behaviors are feelings of frustration, annoyance, even anger at having to do all this new stuff as well as "carry on as usual."

If teachers and others are provided good staff development and ongoing support during early implementation, this early disorder and dismay can, within a matter of months, evolve into a stable, satisfying routine. We note this for two reasons. **First,** you and *everyone* involved should now understand the process of change well enough to accept the rough part and not create unrealistic expectations of immediate mastery. **Second,** this is all the more reason to have a good, solid support system that anticipates and deals with these very problems.

So what kind of staff development and support will help to minimize management concerns, facilitate mastery of the chosen practice, and, by the way, help convey your message that immediate results are not expected? In the next sections we suggest some answers.

Staff Development

Staff development that responds to low-stage concerns is usually in the form of training workshops. People are asking, "What is it," and "How do I do it?" So give them lots of detailed information about the program's key features, approaches, and materials, so they know what they will be required to *do*. This also means hands-on experience with the materials, activities, and strategies so people have a chance to practice, to fail in a safe place, and to get help to do it better. The more practice people can get with what they will be doing in the classroom (or elsewhere), the better.

There should also be time during initial sessions for teachers and other implementors to think about and plan for how they will fit the new practice into their ongoing work. If there are certain scheduling requirements, what is the best timing? Do new materials need to be ordered, or can they go with materials currently in use? How? Giving teachers time to think about and work through these kinds of details individually and as a group can save them both time and grief later.

If staff development will be done in increments, it is important to monitor progress in the interim periods. Have they mastered the content of previous sessions? What other concerns, problems, and issues have emerged? Subsequent sessions are best started by sharing the answers to these questions, either by someone who has monitored and analyzed them beforehand (see the next chapter on monitoring) or during that session itself in small groups with report-outs. How are people doing? What successes have they had? In this way informal networking can occur: problems with solutions, issues with ideas. Where have problems arisen? Having the opportunity to share the discomfort of the early weeks makes people feel relieved that there are others experiencing the same things.

For the thinking skills project in four rural schools in Massachusetts, the outside consultant carried out a sequence of four monthly site visits to each school during the first half of the school year, followed by two additional visits in the second half. Throughout the school year she talked with teachers and administrators by telephone at least once each month. By doing so she was able to offer encouragement and moral support as well as informally monitor progress.

By spreading out staff development, people can be introduced to a limited number of components each time. For example, initial training might be directed at use of a certain piece of instructional software and how to incorporate it into current instruction. During the next training, the focus could be on other teaching strategies that make better use of the software than do current strategies. Similarly, by using a component checklist, it is possible to introduce people to "acceptable" ways of using each component and then in later sessions toward more "ideal" uses.

People will progress at different rates during the first year. Some implementors will master the mechanics of the new practice and will begin experiencing impact concerns such as "How am I doing?" and "How can I do better?" Others may still need some "basic training." One solution is to offer several "tracks" at key points in the staff development sequence to meet the different concerns of all participants. For example, in preparing teachers to use a new elementary science curriculum, teachers were offered two sessions at the same time: problem-solving sessions on classroom management and a discussion on applying Piaget's ideas to teaching science. While teachers were given free choices, those who chose the former had been assessed to have significant management concerns, and those who chose the latter had fewer management concerns (Hall & Loucks, 1978).

Providing Ongoing Support

Training is not the only kind of help that is needed. Other kinds of support include coaching, consultation, peer problem solving, and running interference. While the content of training is driven by the requirements of the new practice, other support needed throughout implementation is driven both by the practice and, even more, by the individual needs of the teachers.

Management by Wandering Around (MBWA) is a leadership concept uncovered by Peters and Waterman (1983) in some of the best-run companies in the country. As summarized by Loucks-Horsley and Hergert (1985):

> MBWA is one of the best tools for you to use during implementation. (See Figure 7.1.) One caution, however: be

totally nonjudgmental and supportive. Teachers are feeling badly enough about being suddenly inept in their own classrooms. They must be reminded -- and you must believe -- that difficulties are perfectly normal, that they will soon master the new practice, and that help will be available. By wandering around, you want to accomplish two important things -- to gather information about where the problems are and to provide encouragement and a pat on the back. Of course, after analyzing the problems, you will also want to assist where you can. Does the new equipment keep breaking? See that it's fixed or replaced. Is the first grade teacher experiencing a problem that the third grade teacher has solved? Pair them up. Are five teachers having the same problem? Schedule a problem-solving session. By resolving, or at least addressing, little problems, you will be helping to keep the implementation on track and will be creating a positive climate (p. 52).

Figure 7.1

SOME THINGS TO LOOK FOR WHILE WANDERING AROUND

- Use or nonuse of new practices and materials
- Successful implementors
- Teachers having trouble, and what the trouble is
- Complaints and negative remarks, informal or voiced as jokes
- Logistical problems; for instance, r...aterials shortages, storage problems, needs for new kinds of space or equipment, issues with scheduling
- Classroom management problems
- Teacher-developed techniques that work

It is quite possible that some people will try to cover up their mistakes and fears in front of you. If so, there are other ways to keep in touch with teachers during this period. Members of your planning team can divide responsibility for checking in with teachers, or one person from each group (K-3, 4-6, or English department, math department, etc.) could be designated to gather information within a group. As with your own Management By Wandering Around, both the monitors and the implementing teachers need assurances that this is an information and helping role, not one of judgment or evaluation.

The concept of peer coaching, as introduced by Bruce Joyce and his colleagues, involves guided practice in the behaviors required by a new process. Coaching has both pedagogical and moral support functions. When a peer coach can observe a teacher's (or administrator's) behavior and provide constructive feedback, the person observed can avoid development and maintenance of bad habits. "Mastering" a new practice incorrectly is a frustrating waste of time, while having guidance when first trying something new can help address the question, "Am I doing it right?"

In addition to providing immediate and constructive feedback, our experiences with coaching also reveal the psychological value of not having to struggle alone. As with the MBWA function, this reaction can only occur when the observer does *not* have a role in evaluation, and when the climate is such that everyone expects a rough beginning. Coaching is often provided in an actual helping role; for example, an observer may supervise one part of a class while the teacher tries his or her new skills with another part.

Another ongoing support role is running interference for new implementors. This includes minimizing or suspending other requirements of teachers and others while they struggle during the first few months of a new practice. A principal, for example, let teachers concentrate on introducing thinking skills into their classrooms and told them he wasn't as concerned about having their reading and math lesson plans for a while. The principal also refused to let visitors come to observe (this included other teachers, schools, and districts) until his teachers felt comfortable in their classrooms. The result was a great sigh of relief from his teachers and time to attend to incorporating thinking skills.

All of this can have enormous meaning on a day-to-day basis. It means that teachers come to expect that they will get the materials and personal help they need when they request them, that the support system is responsive to their needs. It also means that people "show up" frequently in the classrooms or around the teachers' lounge to find out how things are going and whether help is needed. Such a support system is proactive. It means running interference for teachers, protecting them from administrators or school board making new demands on their time. Finally, it means that school leaders make public statements about the importance of the program and integrate it into what they think is important for the school: the mission, goals, curriculum, staff evaluation, interactions with

parents and community, and so forth. A good support system also keeps teachers from "forgetting" to use a program. With visible and sustained support, they continue to improve use of the new program.

Author Talk

Horsley: *The reality of rural school leaders' lives is that their attention and energy is siphoned off in many directions. What advice do you have for helping them sustain their focus in an important effort?*

Terry: *The importance of this phase of change is often overlooked. Not only does it take time, constant support, and adjustment, but probably a different style of leadership. As Blanchard and Hershey pointed out many years ago, leadership needs to be "situational". The high energy, persuasive "can do" types that are so good at getting things started need to now be augmented by a "can do," disciplined, pragmatic, nitty-gritty type who can see to all the details. Not that components of both styles aren't necessary, but the emphasis changes. In my mind, this is where rural schools often hit the wall. There is only one "leader" in the traditional sense. Thus, as the team plans for implementation, the issue of who does what during this stage is very important. In a number of our studies, the teachers themselves created the support groups and, working through the principal, made sure the resources were available -- from books to time to training.*

Look for places that allow for others to make decisions. For example, in one district where I worked, once guidelines were set, it was easy and more effective to allow the bus drivers to make decisions about routes. In fact, I removed the map of routes from my office. Likewise, the school committee, principals, and I (as the superintendent) spent some time looking at the monitoring of budgets in terms of what each of us really needed to know. From this examination we were able to simplify our reports, thus saving time. This also allowed the bookkeeper to help us actively monitor what we needed to by flagging areas for our attention. This kind of clarity and delegation freed all of us to spend our time on more important things: changes that affected teaching and learning.

A word of caution. I've seen too many people learn one lesson the hard way. As we move through these exciting times of change in schools, it is

tempting to do a lot all at once. In rural schools, there is only so much energy. Give one change a chance to "take root" before moving on. When you do move on, make sure that there is some cohesion between what went before, the new change, and the overall goal the school or system is trying to achieve. Someone needs to keep an eye on the big picture and be able to articulate it. Making sure things are connected, and that the connection is obvious, is an important task.

Chapter 8:

Reviewing Progress and Problems

As the high visibility of initial implementation begins to fade, it is time to ask "How are we doing?" Now is the time to keep a close eye on both implementors and the process of implementation. This is critical if you are to catch problems while they are small, spot areas where improvement is needed, and reward and reinforce people and events that have far exceeded expectations. There are three areas we want to address: (1) analyzing progress and perceptions, (2) evaluating outcomes, and (3) making refinements.

Analyzing Progress and Perceptions

Monitoring can benefit from a mixture of formal and informal techniques. An important job for team members is to keep their eyes and ears open, creating opportunities to see things and be told things. This includes visiting schools, classrooms, and teachers' lounges, and calling people for catch-up conversations. Use the CBAM and filter the comments and images through a concerns screen: Do the management concerns still seem to be active? Are personal concerns more or less apparent? Does anybody seem to care at all anymore? Using concerns labels and language helps team members and implementors share their impressions more easily. The thinking skills consultant in Massachusetts, as we noted earlier, kept in touch with school administrators to discuss and analyze their perceptions of how the project was going. Through these conversations, the administrators were better able to focus their "Management By Wandering Around" efforts.

These informal procedures are important. At the same time, you can be more objective and appear more accountable if you can describe progress and perceptions more formally. What are people doing now that they weren't doing before? How do they feel about their involvement, the new

practice, their roles, and their impact on students? The first question -- what people are actually doing -- can be addressed in a number of ways. The most straightforward way is to use the component checklist -- the same tool that helped define the change in the first place and helped assess current practice of implementors prior to staff development. Each of the components becomes a question: what is each implementor doing? Answers can be determined through interviews and observations or reports by the implementor or someone in a key support role (project coordinator, teacher leader, principal). While you can generate numerical values for the "extent of implementation" or "fidelity to the practice," the most useful way to analyze checklist data is to simply add up how each component is being used by how many people. Such a tally sheet gives immediate information about which components are still in the "not yet" stage, which are being changed the most, and which ones are going very well and, therefore, can be ignored temporarily. Figure 8.1 is an example of a report on how teachers in a school were implementing the twelve components of a science curriculum (Loucks & Melle, 1982).

Finding out what people are *doing* -- their actual behaviors -- is one thing; assessing how they are *feeling* about the change is quite another. One tool for this affective dimension brings us back again to concerns. A useful way to monitor concerns is through an Open-Ended Statement of Concerns (Newlove & Hall, 1976). Implementors are periodically asked to write a brief response to the question, "When you think about_____, what are you concerned about?" (Fill in the blank with the name of your program.) Figure 8.2 is an example of such a statement, one that clearly reflects management concerns. This rarely takes more than ten minutes to complete, and can be done at a staff meeting, through teacher mailboxes, or at the beginning of follow-up sessions. Analysis of the statements involves looking across a set of concerns statements to see what patterns are emerging. This can alert the team to prevailing concerns, to danger signs should they exist, and to the range of things on teachers' minds. The statements can be formally scored or they can be scanned for a "quick and dirty" assessment. They can also be used to stimulate discussion in meetings where at least a portion of the time is spent focusing on the school improvement effort.

If there are more than 15 or 20 people involved in the program, or if a more "rigorous" form of concerns assessment is needed, the Stages of Concern Questionnaire can provide a profile of concerns for each

Figure 8.1

SAMPLE BUILDING SUMMARY SHEET

	Outside Intended Program 1	Getting a Good Start 2	3	Well on the Way 4	Best Practices Working 5
1 Time is devoted to science	••• **	*	**	*	**
2 Science is taught according to R-1 Guide	••• •••	••• **			
3 Assessment of pupil learning	••• •••	••• **			
4 Integration of basic skills	*	***** ****	*		
5 The outdoor classroom is used as recommended		••• **	••• *	**	
6 Recommended materials, equipment and media are available			••• **	••• *	**
7 Inservicing and financial arrangements have been made		*	••• **	••• **	
8 Long and short range planning		•••	••• •••	**	
9 Use of class time	**	**	****	**	*
10 Teacher-Pupil interaction facilitates program	•••	****	****		
11 Classroom environment facilitates program		•••	•••	•••	**
12 Instruction is sequenced to facilitate the guided inquiry learning approach	**	**** *	****		

* = one teacher

School Winter Elementary Teacher All grade 3, 4, 5, 6 teachers

(Developed for the Jefferson County Public Schools Elementary Science Program. See Loucks & Melle, 1982.)

Figure 8.2

EXAMPLE OF AN OPEN-ENDED STATEMENT OF CONCERNS

Concerns Statement

When you think about the new math program, what are you concerned about? (Please be frank and answer in complete sentences.)

The new math program is driving me crazy. I never know how many worksheets to have ready. The kids always seem to have their hands up for help. And I never spend less than three hours at home at night grading math sheets. Is it always going to be like this?

implementor (Hall et al., 1979). The profile indicates how intense concerns are at each stage. Profiles for different groups, such as 4th grade teachers or pilot teachers, can be generated so that the data can be examined from a number of perspectives. Regular (for example, at the beginning, middle, and end of a school year) use of the questionnaire can provide a clear picture of the progress of people's concerns about the change.

Evaluating Outcomes

We have an explicit purpose in sequencing this chapter as we have: assessing implementation progress must always precede evaluation of student outcomes. There are two primary reasons for this. First, since it is evident that early use of a significant new practice can be quite uncoordinated and unpredictable, it is simply unrealistic to expect student learning to improve in the first year. You can do all the *monitoring* you want in year one, but wait to collect the achievement measures. Second, even when it is appropriate to use student outcome measures, it is also critical to know what is causing the outcomes to occur. Implementation assessment data are your best source for causal information. An outcome evaluation that results in a finding of "no significant differences" can have at least three explanations: the program is no good; the program wasn't being used; the control group (if there was one) was using as much of the practice as the implementors. It's very confusing to interpret the results

of such a summative evaluation if there are no implementation data. The message is: be sure to collect some.

What outcomes, exactly, do you want to evaluate? For every improvement effort there is an endless list of possible outcomes. Carefully review your list of goals before relying on only one measure. You may be concerned with a variety of student-growth measures: ability, performance, attitude, behavior. Or you might want to include teacher growth measures in the same categories. Are you hoping for school-wide change in such areas as teacher collegiality, school climate, and shared decision making? And what about the practice itself? Are you concerned with its spread to other teachers or other schools? Or ensuring its continuation where it is right now? These are all possible outcomes of a reform effort, and all are worth considering as measures of your indicators of success.

At the end of the first year of the thinking skills project in Sheldon, Vermont, the principal and the consultant were very clear about assessing the project's impact primarily on teachers -- how they felt about incorporation of thinking skills into their classroom repertoires and what kinds of support they wanted to enhance their skills. Secondarily, the first year assessment inquired about changes in their students; in doing so, it was made clear to teachers that they were not being evaluated on the achievements of their students.

Certainly, when teachers were interviewed about the project they reflected on what was happening with their students. But the primary concerns they expressed were about themselves in relation to the students. A Sheldon teacher:

> My whole attitude about the project is entirely different now than when we started. I got the impression that we were going to be taught these strategies that we could use as a "quick-fix" in the classroom, something that would make a vast difference in the children's learning. As many years as I've been in education I should know it's not that easy.
>
> As I studied and started implementing Letteri's (the thinking skills consultant from the University of Vermont) theories into my own curriculum, it took me more than half a year to work

> through it. I began to realize that in fact, yes, many of the things we learned **do** make a difference, but I'm not always sure because it's hard to see it quantitatively. You'll see it qualitatively, maybe even two and three years down the road when the fifth grade teacher comes to you and says, "Boy, you know your kids were doing word problems in math, and they can really read them and understand how to go about doing them.

Formal assessment of student outcomes in Sheldon was scheduled to *begin* later in the second year, a long term process that would build on preliminary information collected during the first year.

Making Refinements

Reviewing a program after implementation is usually done for accountability purposes. We also encourage program review as a way to find out where changes should or could be made. Again, we have an important reason for putting this discussion well after planning and implementation. In the last chapter, as well as in our discussion of setting expectations, we noted that there is an important concern about making changes in a new practice. Quite simply, a practice that does not fit your situation well (for example, it was developed for different kinds of children, or it requires far more resources than are available) will most likely not work. But should you substantially change a practice that has a great deal of appeal in the hope of making it fit your setting? Doing so is truly risky, since there is evidence that the practice was effective in its original form (or you wouldn't have chosen it). It might be better to find another one, or at least give the one you have chosen a stringent test before changing it.

Our research and experience tell us that changes in a practice need to be made with a great deal of care and concern (Huberman, 1983). What fits in one school or one teacher's classroom may not fit elsewhere. And sometimes "individual preference" replaces the definition of "fit": one teacher eliminates all the experimentation in a science program because it doesn't fit with his or her teaching style; another gets rid of the live plants and animals because having them requires extr work that takes away from teaching time.

True refinements come only after something has been tried faithfully, evaluated, and found inadequate. Changes that are made before these conditions are met are not being made with children in mind -- only for teachers with management concerns. Changes made after a practice has been mastered and its effects on students can be assessed are much more likely to have positive consequences -- for both students and teachers. Another Sheldon, Vermont, teacher who experienced a more difficult first year than some of his peers:

> I haven't used it . . . as much as I probably should have. I guess I felt I didn't have time to build this as I went along. And so I'm building it now, after we finished the work with Charlie Letteri. I feel I'm following through with it. I want to get it on paper and really work with it before I use it in the classroom. Next year I hope to start with it in the classroom.

It's up to you and your team to stay in touch with what teachers are doing and to support proposals for well-founded refinements. Helping teachers "suspend disbelief" early on, and assure later discussion and analysis of desired changes, are tricky but highly worthwhile activities. Let them know that refinements are desirable and that there will be time and resources to make them -- **after they have lived with the new program for a while.**

One of the most exciting times in a school improvement effort is when teachers have mastered a change and they begin to focus on its impact on students and how they can make it even better. Teachers look at their own teaching and that of others; they share ideas about what works and what doesn't; and they develop norms of collegiality that benefit them far beyond the use of the program they've implemented.

But all of this won't happen by itself. Making a place for refinements is an activity that you need to plan and budget for after implementation. Think about release time that might be needed, resources for materials development, and perhaps a return visit by the trainer. Schools rarely provide opportunities for teachers to get together in which the agenda is truly theirs. Making that happen and trusting the professionalism of your teachers to achieve good results is especially important at this point in the process.

Author Talk

Hergert: *Evaluation of a project is important for many reasons. Teachers want to know if all this extra work accomplishes anything significant. Administrators and school board members need a reason to support the project and make it part of the life of the district. Parents want to know that the disruptions are worthwhile and that the school is getting better.*

Usually, everyone wants to see test scores improve. Yet, it is hard to get test-score changes as early as everyone wants them. What kind of information should planners seek at the end of the first year that would indicate positive progress?

Loucks-Horsley: *There is a great deal of information that can be collected at the end of the first year that can indicate progress. First, you can ask, "Is anything really different as a result of the project?" That is, "Have our efforts resulted in any changes?" Stick with implementation data to answer these questions. Describe what teachers and students are doing differently, what rearrangements (schedules, space) have been made, and so forth.*

By the end of the first year you should also be able to gather some perceptions of the project's influence on important outcomes. You can ask teachers, students, and parents about the project's benefits. Although achievement scores may not have leapt, you may get reports that students are clearly learning more, are less frustrated, like school better. Gathering informal interview data gives a good picture of these emerging results without prematurely pinning hopes on changes in test scores. A few good anecdotes about teacher and student successes often satisfy even administrator and school board thirsts for data.

I should note also that your task of reporting evaluation data is bigger than that -- it's also necessary to educate your audience about what they should be expecting in terms of outcomes, and why what you are providing them at the end of the first year is important. This keeps you on the offensive, not having to defend why you aren't reporting test scores but saying why what you are reporting is of even greater value at this time.

Terry: *Evaluation can be a very tricky business, primarily because people's judgments about how an effort is going or about its accomplishments are*

based on their perceptions. Where I have been most satisfied with evaluation, the question "How will we know if we're successful" was asked at the beginning of the process. Then, at each meeting we continually referred back to the answers, which we kept on newsprint. We asked people, "What do you think?" This gave a focus to their perceptions.

It's also been important to me to recognize that evaluation is always an intervention. Its purpose is to raise the level of understanding about the change, to see multiple perspectives, to identify different questions, and to inform decisions about the program. It reminds people that the change is a priority and requires their attention. And it gives them a chance to vent, ask for help, analyze their observations. Time and again I've heard principals in rural schools report that their teachers said they appreciated the opportunity to talk about what they were doing and how they felt. What the principals were doing as quick interviews for evaluation were experienced as support by their teachers. On top of that, the principals then felt able to present informative overviews to those outside the school as well as make helpful suggestions to their teachers.

One more note I'd like to add before turning away from evaluation. I think it's so important to keep in mind that the ultimate purpose of any change should be to improve student outcomes. What these are, specifically, and how we measure them, are subjects for another treatise, especially because current perceptions of student outcomes and ways to measure them are sorely limited. But we need to keep our eyes on student outcomes and make sure the changes we make are resulting in the outcomes we want.

Chapter 9:

Maintaining and Continuing the Change

Your community has arrived at a shared vision of what schooling ought to be like. For the long term, there is an understanding that full realization of your vision is likely to take years to achieve and that many of the resources you'll need are not yet available. In the short term, you have mapped backward from the outcomes you want for your young people. You've focused your needs, found better ways to do things, implemented new practices, and refined them to best suit your students, teachers, and school. If the current changes work well, all you have to do is congratulate one another and move on to the next phase of realizing your vision. Right? Wrong!

You will also need to ensure that the successful change is maintained, that it becomes a regular part of the organization's norms and practices. But continuation does not happen naturally. It takes planning and effort, often with people who have not yet been part of the effort. There are four important tasks: (1) planning ongoing maintenance, (2) ensuring administrative supports, (3) renewing staff commitment and skills, and (4) creating the capacity for ongoing reflection.

Planning Ongoing Maintenance

Ideally, maintenance of your program is considered in the first stage of school improvement and again at each stage along the way. In reality, this rarely happens; even when it does, many things can interfere because the rest of your educational universe has been on the move all along. Your improvement effort may be funded as a special project (by a business, foundation, or government sponsor) and it may end when the funding stops. Or, the school system may budget this year for five people to be trained, only to find that next year (after a new school board is elected or the state further reduces local aid), money is not available to train the rest

of the staff. Or, you may have assumed that if the program works in one school it will be mandated for all schools, only to find that the newly appointed superintendent does not share that assumption.

One of two things usually happens after a trial period ends -- either the program comes to a halt (with vestiges remaining among teachers who liked it) or the district slides into fullscale adoption, without much thought given to that process. In either case, planning for ongoing maintenance is minimal and based on assumptions that are often unarticulated and unchecked. With forethought, however, decisions can be made to ensure that a successful program becomes a part of the ongoing life of the school and district.

A decision about continuation should be made after reviewing implementation, assessing impact on students, and determining whether or not the change is a success. The superintendent or school board may need to make such a decision. If so, they will need information about the program's success and recommendations about how the change can be incorporated.

There is often an implicit assumption that if the program works, everyone in the district should use it. But there is a wider range of possibilities for maintaining a successful program. Perhaps only certain schools should incorporate the program, or the program may be established as an alternative to other learning approaches used in a school. The first decision to be made is about how the program will be maintained and what is needed for it to become part of the school system. If the program will be an alternative, then you will need one or more implementing teachers at each grade level or unit to be served and a process for deciding how students will be assigned to it. If the program is to be used throughout the district, you will need to plan another round of training and make arrangements for supplies and other resources that are needed.

The thinking skills project in Massachusetts, for example, had mixed results and future prospects among the four schools involved. In Hadley and Belchertown, the principals saw a significant change in both teachers and students. In the other two schools, however, there was far less administrator encouragement for continuation. The Hadley principal had "seen teachers make translations and carry over" initial learnings about infusing thinking skills. She saw infusion of thinking skills as a continuing

process, one that would take, she projected, about four more years to have fully incorporated into the curriculum; the school's intent was to concentrate on developing the approach and techniques with a group of sixty pre-schoolers starting kindergarten the following year.

In Belchertown, the principal purchased a thinking skills program and materials to carry on the effort, and he made arrangements so that the teachers who originally worked on the project would become mentors for other teachers in the system. In the remaining schools, however, administrators made no plans for future workshops or other resources; their approach from the outset was one of benign neglect, and when budget cuts captured their attention during the implementation year, their commitment waned further.

As we said in Chapter 2, attrition is one of the two major obstacles to continuation. So some thought will need to be given to training teachers who enter the program once it is underway, often in ones and twos, through new hires and transfers. We say "some thought," because it is likely that there will not be a large enough group each year to warrant formal training. Written materials may need to be developed, or an orientation and coaching system established. For example, a new teacher could be paired with an experienced teacher for several months to learn through observation and discussion.

Figure 9.1 provides an example of a checklist used to remind school improvement teams about what they needed to do to "institutionalize" a program.

Ensuring Administrative Support

You may have waived some routine administrative procedures and lines of authority during implementation. For example, you may have added frequent classroom visits, made time for consulting with implementing teachers, or given up staff meeting time for the program. These kinds of arrangements are usually temporary, and now it is time to think about returning to normal.

Figure 9.1

INSTITUTIONALIZATION CHECKLIST FOR THE CONNECTIONS PROJECT

1. New teachers are informed about Connections and trained in its use.
2. Regular sessions are held for teachers to discuss use of Connections, including problem solving and sharing new approaches.
3. Connections strategies are incorporated into the formal curriculum.
4. The budget includes funds to order new Connections materials, as needed.
5. Someone – the principal, a designated teacher, etc. – is assigned to check in with teachers about their use of Connections, any problems they are experiencing, or great ideas they have for its improved use.

Who needs to know about this program, and what do they need to know in order to take part in it? Of course, you have kept various people informed throughout this process. Now, however, it is time to "turn over the reins" to others in the system. If the program will spread to other buildings, those principals need information and assistance. Support roles for central office people may need to be negotiated.

Turf issues may arise. For example, to get the extra resources needed to continue your program you may have to compete with other programs that could lose resources as a result of your success. Or, the program may bump into other programs (reading vs. remedial reading, for example) or into someone else's new priority ("reading was our priority last year; *this* year we should emphasize math"). Your skills as a negotiator and team player will be needed here.

If talk of these issues strikes a familiar chord within you, there is good reason: you've almost come full circle now, and the responses you are getting to your continuation efforts probably reflect lower stage concerns, just like the concerns people had when you first started talking about the then-new program -- awareness and informational, personal and management. Be both mindful and understanding of where people are in the process.

In order for a program to be maintained over time, administrators must include the program's requirements in their plans, from evaluating staff to ordering materials. If the principal in a new building doesn't know what to look for or doesn't notice how well teachers are using the new practice, many teachers will discard it. Some programs require new materials each year that must be included in the budget. Also, someone else's new initiative will be undertaken sooner or later and it will move to the "front burner." When that happens, your program must be one of the "givens" that is planned around.

Renewing Staff Commitment and Skills

Starting a new initiative often concentrates energy that raises morale and energy level. If the new effort is ultimately transformed into "the way we do things here," it is only natural for the level of energy to go down. In addition to losing the intensity, it's possible for old habits to reassert themselves and the practice itself to disappear.

You or someone else in the district should take responsibility for periodically checking in with staff to make sure any wrinkles are ironed out, to reinforce good use, and to identify (and reward or celebrate) new areas of growth. Thus, an extension of your support function is to be a linking pin with other people in the system who have new ideas. Often, a new practice will make staff more efficient in some area so that there is time to engage in new or more sophisticated activities in another area, or to help find ways to allocate more time for one subject and less for others.

Creating the Capacity for Ongoing Reflection

In this sense, school improvement is never ending. Instead, you will find yourself recycling into new spheres and new areas. Your school and district should become self-renewing systems. Your immediate improvement goal may have been to start a limited effort to solve a particular problem, but a large part of your mission is to establish a professional climate where everyone constantly strives for improvement. Schools in which this is the case are not only better for students, but also

exciting and stimulating places for adults. In sum, the can become learning communities for all who come into contact with them.

Our final message is that nothing you undertake in the way of educational reform will ever be realized exactly as you envision it now. Consider all of the changes that have taken place in your schools and community over the past decade -- changes in funding, enrollment, composition of the student body, administration, curriculum, programs, state mandates. How many of them were predicted? How many changes took place as planned? How many had ripple effects that caused more unexpected changes to occur? Our own experience is that once we get beyond mistaking hindsight for knowledge, we are left with the certain wisdom that today's plans are not likely to fit tomorrow's reality.

ASCD (1987) provides a useful analogy in its videotape overview of strategic planning. It is about a ship chartered to transport goods from Halifax, Nova Scotia, to a distant port. The ship's planners collect and analyze information on ship size, engine displacement, cargo capacity, prevailing currents, and weather forecasts. A course of navigation and timeline are plotted, and the ship leaves port according to schedule. Two days out there is an unexpected weather change. Extra fuel is used trying to stay the course, heavy seas cause the cargo to shift, and, inevitably, the ship strays from its planned route.

In the context of school improvement and reform, the traditional response to such changes is to try to get back on the original course. After all, the journey is important and the plan was well conceived. So we take corrective measures. All seems to be going well when, once again, there is a sea change that takes us off the intended course. And we try to get back on course again.

This is not the strategy chosen by the ship in our example. Rather than calibrating on the original course, the ship's captain and navigator constantly set their bearings on their ultimate destination. Once off it, their original course has little relevance. Some old information still counts -- ship size, cargo, and especially, their destination. But there is also new information to be considered about weather, remaining fuel, and so on.

The ship's destination is your school and community's shared vision. It is your journey toward the vision that matters, not your arrival there in a

pre-determined time frame and on a fixed course. Your vision lies beyond an ever-changing horizon. What's needed, then, is a capacity for engaging with unexpected change in the future and ways to incorporate new and old information.

This is the continuation part of your reform effort. The first three sections in this chapter deal primarily with how to ensure maintenance and incorporation of discrete improvement efforts. Providing time and a means for ongoing reflection is a way of bridging the gap between classroom changes and your vision of schooling in your community. Doing so is both a reality check and a reminder that you have a purpose far greater than the sum of the programs and practices you have implemented.

Author Talk

Loucks-Horsley: *Matt Miles (1983) points out that loss of a project advocate can be a major threat to institutionalization of a change. Often there is an advocate or champion in the school or district who is responsible for much of a project's success. By virtue of that very success, the advocate gets a juicy job offer and departs the district, leaving the project to fend for itself. How can projects prevent this very common scenario from happening?*

Hergert: *There is no way to keep good people from leaving. I once worked with a divided school district where the assistant superintendent was a great supporter of the project and could be counted on to step in at points of deadlock to resolve the conflicts. He left to become a superintendent just as implementation was beginning, and we had to figure out other conflict-resolution measures! I worked in another district for three years where, at the end of each year, our key "change agents" were RIFed (due to severe cutbacks, not persecution), and we started over again each year.*

A team really does help in these instances because there is already a base of support broader than a single individual can provide. Additionally, relationships have been built in the team, and sometimes a secondary leader steps forward.

The essential learnings are two. **Don't rely too heavily on a single individual.** *Keep lines of communication open with many people and make*

sure many people share ownership of the project. Second, **persevere even when the leader leaves.** *If the effort* **was** *important to make, it is* **still** *important. You just have to keep going, filling in the gaps left until other people take over.*

You can and should encourage the person leaving to do whatever possible to put decisions in writing, to clarify who will have what authority, to provide some stability and support for the project at least for a while after he or she leaves.

And don't begrudge these people their success -- wish them well! Usually, they have contributed to the progress achieved thus far; it's up to you to ensure that progress isn't lost. They will probably spread seeds of school improvement where they go next and will become part of your network of colleagues and supporters. Who knows? You may be next!

Terry: *I've observed that, in fact, successful people move on in higher percentages from rural schools. So what? If the previous steps have been taken, this should not be a problem. The change will have become part of "what we do around here." Particularly in rural schools the norm is more often than not that most everyone is involved from the beginning. Thus, the loss of one person is not a tragedy. However, in looking to fill the vacated position, pay attention to finding people who already are skilled in the program or have the philosophical bent to acquire the skills. If there has been an understanding of how this particular change fits into the overall future of the school, then the transition should not be a hard one.*

So, are we finally finished? In a self-renewing system, no! The point that we have been trying to make throughout this guide is that there is a need to continue to learn and grow, that new programs should not be discrete events but should fit into the broader framework of who we want to be and how we get there.

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"ACTION-MINDED TEACHERS, ADMINISTRATORS AND CONSULTANTS WILL TREASURE THIS BOOK."
- David Trujillo, 1990-1991 President,
National Rural Education Association

Rural schools are different from urban and suburban schools. . . but not in all ways. Small town life is not exactly the same as life in a city or suburb.

This book takes a close look at what is unique about life in rural schools and their communities, and what these places have in common with larger schools and communities. In doing so, the authors sort out the rural exceptions to (usually urbanized) rules, dispel some of the myths about change in rural settings, and offer solid strategies and processes that promote lasting and worthwhile change, whether in the classroom or the community.

The authors rely on the latest and most reliable research on rural schools and on change strategies in general -- much of which they have been instrumental in collecting and analyzing. They also balance what the research has to say with what they have learned from the wealth of their diverse experiences in educational settings -- as a rural superintendent, as a community organizer in rural communities, and as classroom teachers, educational researchers, and change agents and consultants in all sizes of schools and communities.

Supplementing the research and analyses are the words, stories, and collective wisdom of rural school educators who have experienced changes large and small in their communities. They have learned some hard lessons about managing change that are sure to ring true for many readers.