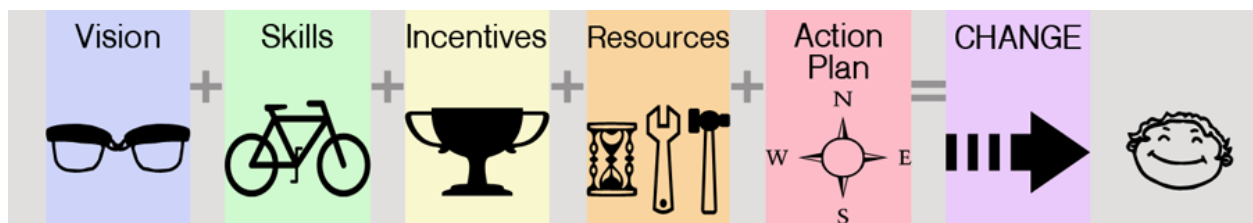


"The secret of change is to focus not on fighting the old, but on building the new." Socrates

Managing Transformational Change Efforts

CLI has been partnering with school districts for 25 years in order to implement our complex and comprehensive school improvement model. As in the beginning, we can still say the most telling indicator of success during such a transformational change is the way it is managed by key leaders within the district. Remember, *leaders* not only refers to the board and superintendent, it also refers to other district employees such as administrators, teacher leaders, and teachers themselves. Before any change begins, key leaders should meet and discuss the plan for change and the role of each staff member within the change process.

In any complex process, once implementation begins, analysis of staff reactions can dictate what piece or pieces might be missing in order for full and successful implementation to take place. In other words, meet each staff member where they are and move forward by determining what they need. Change researcher, Anthony Ambrose, theorized that five elements must be present in order for change to occur and that if one or more of them is missing, there is a specific emotional response. The change equation will allow leaders to plan the change strategies and also analyze where previous change efforts may have gone wrong. They need only ask the question: "Why is this person reacting this way?" The equation looks like this:



Initially, there must be a vision. Why is change needed? Is the vision shared and are people buying in? Are there measurable, achievable goals? A lack of vision leads to confusion. When the staff asks questions such as "Why should I do this?" or "What are they thinking?" they may not realize the overall vision for change.



The next necessary element is skills. What skills are needed? Do staff members have expertise or training in what they are being asked to do? If not, will it be provided from someone they trust? Feeling as if skill or training is lacking may lead to anxiety.



Employees typically also need incentive to make a change. How will it benefit them? There is nothing worse than feeling as if time is being wasted. Everyone must see the value in the change before it can happen. Incentive is the piece that can either build consensus or build resistance among staff. Incentives can be tangible such as monetary, or intangible such as personal achievement or prestige.



Resources are also important to change efforts and can be physical or emotional. We often hear comments such as “They want us to do more with less” or “They don’t support me.” A lack of resources leaves people frustrated. What resources are readily available? Are they appropriate? Are there in-house people who are resources? Is the distribution of resources fair? What resources are needed and how will you get them?

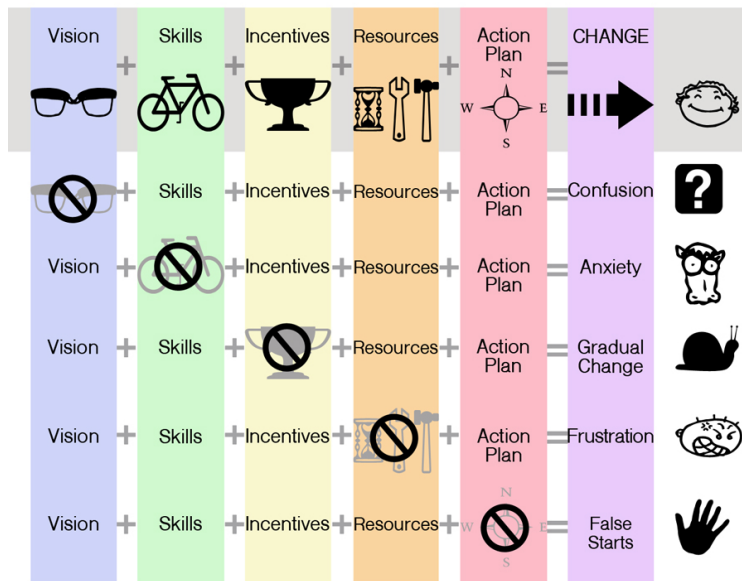


The final element required for change is an action plan. The action plan for change should be clear and developed by a representation of all stakeholders. Without it, staff may feel as if they are running in place and not moving forward. They feel like they are going round and round without any clear direction even though they are working diligently. Without a plan, gaining traction and moving forward is impossible.



To move forward with change, take stock of where your district is, knowing that individuals will be in different places and missing different elements. Don’t make assumptions about the shortcomings of your people. It is infinitely harder—and often more rewarding—to lead from a place of curiosity and empathy and ask the question “Why?” Use Ambrose’s change management chart and make it your mission to understand what is missing and what will move your district forward. As Albert Einstein said, “Life is change. Growth is optional. Choose wisely.”

Managing Complex Change



This idea for this chart may be attributable to Dr. Mary Lippitt (1987), Anthony Ambrose (1987), or Tim Knoster (1991). Dr. Mary Lippitt claims to hold the original copyright, however CLI could not directly verify the original source publication. The artwork for this particular version of the chart is original to CLI.