

- What must Will Wonkermann, as a new principal, do to assuage "Professor" Seeger's concerns relative to the change process at Childers School?
- Do any of the other seven reasons for resisting change apply to this particular scenario? How and by what means?

How to Overcome Resistance to Change

Overcoming resistance to change is not an easy chore. Research over the decades has suggested that resistance to change can be alleviated through communication, participation, facilitation, support, negotiation, professional development, empowerment, motivation, and the elimination of nonnegotiable aspects of curriculum and instruction (Chin & Benne, 1969; Fullan, 2002; Heller, 1998; Lunenburg & Irby, 2006; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2008; Sarason, 1994). From a negative or detrimental perspective, resistance to change can be overcome by a leader who utilizes coercion and manipulation (Carrell, Kuzmits, & Elbert, 1997), neither of which the authors would recommend.

Effective curriculum leaders manage to overcome faculty resistance to change by (1) respecting people, (2) establishing high levels of trust in a supportive climate, (3) enacting power equalization (participative leadership), (4) confronting the status quo (typically a causal factor in change resistance), and (5) creating an environment of team ownership (i.e., buy-in).

Robbins and Hunsaker (2005), Robbins and Judge (2008), and Sorenson, Cortez, and Negrete (2010) assert that resistance to change can be overcome by a leader who incorporates influential methods. These methods include the following:

1. *The establishment of integrity.* School personnel and other members of the learning community will never listen to nor respond to a curriculum leader who they believe is dishonest, incompetent, non-objective, unethical, or immoral.
2. *The use of positive approaches.* When initiating change, curriculum leaders must incorporate positive approaches by working with the curriculum team and other members of the learning community. Such approaches include being respectful, genuine, caring, and recognizing of the accomplishments of individuals and groups. Other

positive approaches to change initiation include being sincere, direct, and tactful in all forms of communication.

3. *The articulation of a clear vision and mission.* Faculty and staff will never be convinced of the need for change unless the principal can effectively establish a vision as to how the curricular program needs to be improved. To do so, the curriculum leader must carefully articulate the need for change through the medium of a clear and precise message, which must be in concert with the mission of the school.

4. *The use of data-based decision making.* Logical and reasoned arguments for change can be readily presented to members of the learning community when a principal incorporates data into decision-making processes. However, any decision for change will have limited impact unless the need for change is supported with research and data from which a factual assessment can be ascertained relative to how the curriculum must be transformed.

Alex Cornell, as cited in Hughes, Ginnett, and Curphy (2009) suggested that our world today is a chaotic place—however, such a muddled world must be confronted methodically. Data-based analysis and decision making is the basis for a systematic critique within any organization. This is especially true when change must be of the highest quality. High-quality change, based on data analysis, will have a direct and measurable impact on curricular decisions. Curriculum leaders must determine if there is a quality (data-driven) component to any change decision and subsequent modifying initiative. To do so, simply ask, does this change and initiative seek to improve services to our students? If the answer is yes, it is imperative that the principal collect the necessary data, with appropriate analysis, to ensure that the highest quality decisions are made in the best interest of students (Sorenson, 2005).

5. *The use of persuasion.* Effective principals, who initiate curricular change, articulate a clear vision and mission. They also persuade others with the presentation of rational and objective evidence (research- and data-based information) that supports the planned curriculum change. Principals who are exceptional persuaders possess a leadership skill that builds trust among followers (Sorenson, 2004). Susan Gerhards (2008), former educator and conservative commentator, has remarked, "How a faculty perceives change, whether positively or negatively, seldom depends on the outcome of