Launching Initiatives and Staying Afloat

As teachers strive to increase learning in the classroom, their efforts impact several major groups – students, parents, and other teachers. As a leader of teachers, the principal’s efforts impact several groups as well – teachers, administrators, the superintendent and the school board. In order to stay afloat when launching an initiative, it is imperative to keep all the stakeholders successful. Your actions will have different effects on the members of each of these stakeholder groups. You can expect to encounter support or resistance from the stakeholder groups depending on their attitudes and experiences within the initiative.

Some students, for example, will love the extra challenge of raised standards while others will resist the increased pressure to meet standards. Some students will love the more interactive strategies used by teachers while others will wish they could return to the days of sitting quietly and merely having to listen to lectures. In general, students will support teachers’ efforts so long as they know they are safe from embarrassment, can be successful, have teachers and peers that care about them, have a sense of autonomy, are enjoying their experiences, and see that what they are doing is relevant in some capacity. Sound familiar? The Six Keys are basic human needs.

Parents will vary as well with their perceptions of the PEAK Teaching for Excellence Model. We’ve included a short list of probable parent concerns here. Again, in general, if we make certain that parent needs with respect to their children are met, we will be more likely to have their support rather than their resistance. Parents want to know that:

- their children’s health and safety are protected.
- their right to have and maintain their family values is protected.
their children are taught the essential academics.
their children are not part of an experiment with “new approaches.”
their children get the best possible education that is not adversely affected because of others (i.e., My child isn’t being held back while another child is still learning).
their children are treated fairly.

People & Change

When implementing the Teaching for Excellence Model, teachers will have the same general needs based on the Six Keys as students and parents. However, different groups within a school have very different staff development needs. The staff of a building is just as diverse as a classroom and requires the same type of differentiation. Each group requires a different kind of support from administration and leadership. Using a historical metaphor makes it easier to understand how to support teachers while at the same time moving the initiative forward.

In the metaphor, people going through a change process fall into five general categories: explorers, pioneers, settlers, stay behinds and nopes. It is important to note that all of us fall into each category depending on both the actual change expected and our contextual positioning in other areas of our lives. For example, a teacher who is healthy, has a stable home life, has healthy parents and ten years of teaching experience will be more likely to be able to successfully implement change than a new parent, someone going through a divorce or someone who is trying to arrange long-term care for an elderly parent. All the individuals in each of the categories are good people. The metaphor only applies to their receptiveness to change and what support needs they might possess.
Explorers
Historically, explorers are the people who ventured to new and exciting places simply because they loved the quest of finding the new and exciting. They tended to be bored with what was and believed there was something out there that might be worth going after without knowing what or how to get there and back safely. These people followed their hopes and dreams without any real knowledge of what they would actually encounter. Many of them died; some survived. Very few others would risk going with them initially, and few would follow after them. Imagine the conversations Lewis and Clark’s neighbors had when the two announced their travel plans. And look at how many actual individuals today are jumping at the chance to explore outer space.

In modern change in a school setting, explorers are the people who try many new things but often don’t succeed or do those things well. They are typically not respected as good teachers, but they sure love every training. People don’t follow them as they continue to move quickly to the “next new thing.” Explorers are often courageous, risk takers, gamblers, and chasers of dreams. What characterizes them from pioneers, however, is that they are often ineffective, and definitely not seen as leaders by the other staff. They are not trusted and/or not respected. While some succeed, many don’t.

In terms of staff development support, leave the explorers alone. Initially, they are dangerous to the initiative. Other staff will perceive an explorer’s efforts as “oh, there goes Jim again—off on the next bandwagon. This won’t last. He’s so full of himself.” Try to keep explorers away from valued movements until the movement has caught on with a significant percentage of the teachers whom others will trust, respect, listen to, copy and follow.

Pioneers
Pioneers, historically, have consistently been strong, knowledgeable, brave, skilled, mildly cautious, hard-working, respected, and trusted. People will follow pioneers. All a pioneer needed to know in order to venture into the unknown was that an explorer had been there and returned—alive. Brave enough not to need minutely detailed maps or plans, pioneers tended to want to open newly discovered territory in their own way. While pioneers are very competent, it’s important to recognize they didn’t go there first, and they needed support of the government, cavalry and many others to survive and succeed.

In our schools, pioneers can successfully lead the way for initiatives. They will grab onto solid, new approaches to open up new horizons of success. They can translate general strategies into their content areas. In fact, they often want to do things with their own twists. However, just as early pioneers needed help, modern pioneers need it as well. Pioneers need guidelines, coaching, permission, ongoing correction, validation, evidence of success, support and protection. They need time to get the new approaches up and running effectively in their own classrooms before being asked to share or model for settlers. Do not let your pioneer fail by not providing expert coaching and support.

Settlers
Historically, settlers move in after the pioneers and require the help of the government and others to do so. They need someone to make and supply the maps, put in the roads, build the forts, provide the shipping systems, and provide the systems for safety. Settlers have always been good people, but they haven’t done the original work. They need the supplies, coaching, protection, process, equipment, and materials to be readily available. They typically do not
have the skills, resourcefulness or positioning in life to open up new opportunities on their own.

In our schools, then, settlers need to have the work, materials, models, supplies, and support systems in place before they are pushed into anything. They will want to do things their own way, but they will need protection, support, guidance and time to do things well. It is best to leave them alone until the pioneers are established well enough that settlers can follow their examples and use their materials. Early or top-level settlers will want to be exposed to new options and, they will be supportive if they are not pressured. These are the teachers who enthusiastically attend workshops, yet typically implement little in their classrooms right away. Once the system is ready to support them, however, they are willing to try. Know that later or lower level settlers are also watching the new approaches, though through a different lens. These settlers might be a bit more cautious. Their skepticism is easily increased by stay behinds if leadership isn’t careful to provide reassurance during initial workshops or training.

Stay-Behinds
Throughout time, the stay behinds were happy right where they were. As long as they felt safe they would be left alone, they didn’t complain or try to block explorers, pioneers or settlers. They needed to have continued support and feel they were valued. Unless efforts by explorers, pioneers or settlers impacted their lives, stay behinds had no reason to fear that any “movements” or change.

On staff, the stay behinds need to feel that they are still supported and protected from having to change. If they feel threatened, they will rise up with the “nopes” to actively campaign to convince the settlers to block any initiative. Again, it is important to note that these individuals are good people. For example, someone who is one year from retirement might have no intention of learning what he or she perceives as something new. If treated positively, a stay behind might actually turn into a solid pioneer. We met a teacher from Florida who delayed his retirement after he tried a few strategies in his classroom and experienced success. The following year at an inservice training, he jokingly showed us new advertising fliers for school supplies that had replaced the sporting goods catalogs he had been reading in the back of the room the previous year.

Nopes - “No Ways”
Not only did the nopes plan on not going anywhere, they actively tried to convince everyone else that the “new” whatevers were bad, wouldn’t be supported and must be stopped as one more thing that would undermine everyone’s best interests.

These grumbling complainers can be rendered powerless when isolated. By isolation we mean not pushing the settlers too soon or the stay behinds before the settlers have succeeded. It is critical to not accidentally give these “anti-everything that the leadership wants” or other ‘changers’ want” types from getting power they can’t get on their own. Make sure pioneers are supported, coached, protected and given whatever they need to succeed with the critical attributes of the initiative. Involve top settlers early so they see what is out there, but only push and encourage them to move after you and the pioneers are ready to provide all that is needed for success. Settlers will need materials, time, coaching and content-specific support. Push the stay behinds only after they can be supported in developmentally appropriate ways. By supporting the other groups, you will prevent the nopes from carrying any credence with your staff.
General Tips for Success

- Regularly provide evidence for mastery or progress. Whether we’re talking about children or adults, people tend to perform better and persevere longer when they have regular evidence of their progress. Dieters and athletes have used this trick successfully for a long time.

- Operate from an “I know you can do it” perspective. Be certain that signs, posters, grading procedures, etc. convey that conviction.

- Build and maintain a total community of learners in which you are also a member. Leaders need to be alongside their followers every step of the journey. Model the strategies you are asking others to implement. Even if you don’t perform them perfectly, just the fact you are also working on improving will be noticed. Besides, if you are implementing, you are experiencing what others are experiencing, and you might have insights for better ways to support your followers.

- Never quit doing anything which stakeholders value until you have something else up and running that is as good or better in the eyes of the stakeholders. This is especially true with parents and students, but it also applies to teachers. Dual systems may need to be operating while the initiative is first underway. For example, traditional report cards continue while portfolios and student-led conferencing are introduced.

- Determine and track the indicators of a successful schooling effort that your stakeholder groups value. Look beyond just standardized test results. Consider tracking drop-out rates, grades, college admissions, referral rates, attendance, changes in numbers of sections in upper level courses or special education referrals. Look for ways to celebrate success.

- Do not become driven by exceptions – focus on the rule, but support the exception. Teachers will have a learning curve as they try new ideas. Recognize this before mandating a policy that addresses what is actually an exception to the norm.

- Avoid inconveniencing others for your endeavors.

- Solicit team efforts.

- Maintain flexibility.

- Adhere tightly to best-known practices regarding changes within an organization.

- Solicit input.

- Avoid creating or fostering “in groups” and “out groups.”

- Devote the first five to ten minutes of faculty meetings to teachers sharing success stories regarding initiatives and teaching standards.

- Expect people to build on their strengths.

- Don’t be an expert – be a “guide on the side.”


- Create a regular forum for teachers and administrators to air and resolve their concerns.

- Maintain a regular supply budget to support classroom reform efforts. For example, teachers implementing parallel assessments will use more paper. Pioneer teachers might be willing to purchase paper out of their pocket if they are able. Settlers won’t. Both groups, however, will feel valued and respected if you provide the paper for them.
Think Big, Start Small

“Think big, start small,” is something we first heard from Dr. Tom Guskey (University of Kentucky). Vision is essential to forward movement, but so too is an appropriate infrastructure that supports and provides reasonable steps and directions for people. Too often, ambitious hopes have failed to become reality because lessons taught to us by stories such as *The Tortoise and the Hare* have been forgotten.

Succeeding with Change

Lessons Learned through Historical Reflections

As much as leaders in new initiatives would like them in place “yesterday,” historically this has seldom worked. In fact, when initiatives are effectively supported throughout the shift, which means overextended time until institutionalization, they have often succeeded. Too often with major changes in the “way things are done around here,” people are pushed beyond their belief systems and the provided support systems which almost always leads to failure to succeed with the initiative.

It is important to recognize the different places people are in life and the true and often hidden realities of success with a change. History provides us with powerful insights for successful change efforts. It is up to us to take advantage of the consistent trends and patterns in human nature and change. It is also important as we look at the various groups identified in the metaphor to value and respect them all – something that can be facilitated by recognizing that most of us have, do or will fit all these “roles” in some aspects of our lives.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Historical Metaphor Group</th>
<th>Group Characteristics</th>
<th>Historical Needs</th>
<th>Parallel Needs for Shifts Today</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Explorers</td>
<td>Historically, these are the people who went places just because of hopes and dreams without any real knowledge of what they would actually encounter. Many of them died, some survived. Very few would go with them, and few would follow after them. In modern change, these are the people who try lots of things, often don’t succeed or do them well. They are typically not respected as good teachers, but they sure seem to love every training. People don’t follow them. Explorers are often courageous, risk takers, gamblers, ineffective, chasers of dreams, not trusted and/or not respected. Some succeed, but many don’t. Explorers typically go it alone: they are often not team players.</td>
<td>Historically, explorers needed the constant challenge of pursuing something new. Explorers just needed to know there might be something good out there; to get started, they didn’t need to know or have everything that might be needed for success.</td>
<td>Leave them alone. Try to keep them from valued movements until the movement has caught on with a significant percentage of the teachers others trust, respect, listen to, copy and follow. When explorers are involved too early, two possible situations develop: 1. In the unusual event that the explorer is highly skilled and likely to succeed, others will back off. Pioneers and settlers will stay away because they either see the explorer as not collaborative or as so skilled that the new ideas may work for the explorers pursuing it, but it won’t work for others. 2. In the more likely event that the explorer is not highly skilled or typically successful with new ideas, the pioneers and settlers will shun the new idea as “one more crazy idea” that won’t work.</td>
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<td>Parallel Needs for Shifting Today</td>
<td>Historical Needs</td>
<td>Group Characteristics</td>
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<td>Protection</td>
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<td>Valuation</td>
<td>Just-in-time instruction, ongoing correction, permission, coaching, guidelines, help</td>
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<td>Valuation</td>
<td>Ongoing correction, permission, coaching, guidelines, help</td>
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<td>Ongoing correction</td>
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<td>Help</td>
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<td>Permission</td>
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<td>Historically needed help</td>
<td>Pioneers</td>
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<td>Coaching</td>
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<td>Preserve</td>
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<td>Guidelines</td>
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<td>Help</td>
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<td>Modern pioneers need</td>
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<td>Historically needed help</td>
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<td>Twist, but just as early pioneers</td>
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<td>Support</td>
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<td>Meet future with the work</td>
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<td>Support</td>
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<td>History will be a solitaire</td>
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<td>They will find out what they</td>
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<td>may need to do things with them</td>
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<td>Visit the government cemetery to</td>
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<td>succeed</td>
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<td>Support</td>
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Pioneers are consistently hard workers who are hard working, respected, trusted and followed. They are knowledgeable, resourceful and patient. They have consistently been strong.

Pioneers have been truly successful, resulting in others willing to follow. Without any other reputation for success and collaboration tended to will, it is the same, they often have discovered better, their way opened new horizons of success. They have been truly successful, they have been truly successful.
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<td>Settlers</td>
<td>Throughout history, settlers go when the going is smooth, relatively easy, and promising enough “good stuff” to make the change more than worth the effort. Settlers move in after the pioneers have made it safe. Settlers need to know that others have ensured the ever-presence of maps, transportation, defense, and communication systems. In addition, they need whatever it will take to ensure the success of themselves and their families. Settlers are the essential base for a shift to be successful. They are naturally positive about what pioneers are doing, but they aren’t going to do it until the “way is paved” and it is proven do-able and safe for them. It is necessary for them to know that pioneers are succeeding, but it is not sufficient. Settlers need assurances that they will have ALL that they need for success given their very different skills, ability and desire to take risks, time and other resources. Settlers can be swayed to oppose any initiative. If at all threatened, the “stay behinds” and “no ways” will mount a strong and usually effective campaign to win the settlers in a battle for the status quo.</td>
<td>Settlers have always been good people, but they haven’t done the original work. They need the supplies, coaching, protection, process, equipment, materials to be readily available. They typically did not have the skills and resourcefulness to open up new opportunities on their own. Settlers historically tended to be the ones who bought and used what others had done and made relatively easy to use. They tended not to be the original builders, risk takers, or developers.</td>
<td>Settlers need to know see up front where people are going and what they are doing, how they’re being protected and supported. They will watch carefully and positively as long as they see people succeeding and protected. To ensure success, keep settlers as settlers until enough support and protection can be convincingly assured. Leave them alone until the pioneers have done things well enough that it is time for others to follow. Early or top settlers will want to be exposed to new options and, if they are not pressured, they will be supportive though they typically won’t do anything until they and the system are ready. Settlers need to</td>
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<td>have the work, materials, models, supplies, support system in place before they are pushed into anything</td>
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<td>do things “their own way,” but they typically will not have the expertise or the desire or time to modify things correctly</td>
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<td>Initiative</td>
<td>Historical Needs</td>
<td>Group Characteristics</td>
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<tr>
<td>It's time to create a new vision.</td>
<td>The settlers will remain supportive and protected if they are staying behind and feel that they are needed.</td>
<td>They felt safe they would be left alone and that their way of life was ensured.</td>
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<td>To succeed just out of sheer numbers.</td>
<td>The settlers will be able to succeed if they are supported by a critical mass.</td>
<td>When settlers have believed without resistance, they felt safe.</td>
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<tr>
<td>And the settlers are having enough.</td>
<td>The settlers do their own thing.</td>
<td>Historically, the settlers were happy when they were blockaders and pioneers and settlers do not need to complete anything about their lives.</td>
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<td>Parallel Needs for Shiffs Today</td>
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<tr>
<td>No Ways – They Will NOT Go</td>
<td>Not only have the NO WAYS not planned on going anywhere, they actively tried to convince everyone else that “the new ideas” were bad, wouldn’t be supported, were dangerous, and were undermining of all that was valued. Historically, these people have done all they could to stop new ideas before they get started. They argued that the new ideas are not sound, needed and must be stopped as one more thing that would undermine everyone’s best interests.</td>
<td>It has always been critical to not accidentally give these “anti everything” people power or influence they can’t get on their own.</td>
<td>Keep the No Ways powerless! No Ways gain their power from the mistakes made in leading initiatives. Make sure pioneers are supported, coached, instructed, protected and given whatever they need to succeed with the critical attributes of the initiative. Involve top settlers early so they see what is out there, but only push and encourage them to move after the pioneers and you have and are providing all that is needed for success. Only push the stay behinds after they can be supported in developmentally appropriate ways.</td>
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These “grumbling complainers” have historically been powerless as long as they were isolated through leadership effectively not pushing the settlers and stay behinds too soon.
Implications for Training for Institutionalization

Effective training initiatives have improving results with students as a major focus. To do so, they respond effectively to the needs and the realities of the community, district, schools, leaders and implementing teachers.

Effective training initiatives advance in waves carefully planned for the different levels of people involved based on their backgrounds, attitudes and developmental support. These waves include the following:

- just-in-time awareness building
- developmentally appropriate instruction
- incrementally developing instruction
- effective mentoring, coaching, management support, curriculum and assessment growth
- on-going development and use of local coaches, leaders, mentors and trainers

What follows is a “generic,” sequenced list of critical waves in training for institutionalization. Each wave occurs repeatedly over time with new groups.

1. Awareness and permission building workshops
2. Involvement of “advance scouts” (pioneers and high settlers with principals) in national level trainings
3. Local Institute to develop the advance implementers with principals, volunteer teachers and their principals (pioneers, high settlers, settlers, and some explorers with caution) and the advance scouts who attended the national training
4. Follow through just-in-time support of advance implementers and principals plus beginning training of new waves in workshops, classroom coaching, etc.
5. Beginning development of local mentors, coaches, and future local trainers
   a. Effective pioneers and high settlers engage in Advanced Teaching for Excellence training in Colorado
   b. Qualified advanced implementing pioneer teachers and administrators engage in phase one of Advanced Teaching for Excellence
   c. Qualified advanced implementers engaged in Advanced Teaching for Excellence training at sites around the country
6. Next wave involvement in National Level Institute and Advanced Seminar
7. Next Local Institute with qualified support from local mentors and coaches at developmentally appropriate levels
8. Continue looping steps 1 through 7 with continued re-engagement at higher and higher levels for step 5
A Dozen Lessons Learned

1. “Think big, but start small.” Tom Guskey, University of Kentucky. Create a vision, develop a human-centered plan, and make consistent progress. Avoid the often fatal error of starting too big or moving too quickly or too slowly.

2. “In order to cause change, we must change beliefs. In order to change beliefs, we must provide do-able and practical strategies that will result in desired and improved results.” Tom Guskey.

3. “Never take people where you aren’t absolutely sure of what is going to happen.” Professor for Steve Cousins, Superintendent, Traverse City Public Schools. Make sure you are fully aware from others’ perspectives and realities exactly what your people will experience as a result of training and initiatives before you involve them.

4. Never mandate anything until you are absolutely certain everything is in place that may be needed to ensure the initial and on-going support for people and for the initiative. This includes support, permission, materials, and just-in-time nurturing, success celebrations, next step instruction, necessary course corrections, etc.

5. Monitor constantly and adjust as needed to ensure no one flounders or fails.

6. Teaching is a complex performance, and as for all performances, provide on-going coaching. Performance is not meaningfully improved through single events or a series of events.

7. Provide on-going, differentiated instructional opportunities that are matched to the needs of the different developmental levels and varying realities of the teachers.

8. Always be the first onto the helicopter, first off the helicopter into battle, on the field throughout the battle, last on the helicopter, and never leave anyone on the field. Adapted from the character Lt. Col. Hal Moore leadership role in We Were Soldiers.

9. Build, maintain and leverage positive relationships to ensure success for everyone.

10. Maintain focus.

11. Gather meaningful and multifaceted evidence of progress toward valued goals.

12. Stay the course through the challenges that will arise as the successes begin to threaten others who are not yet there.

8 Professional Development Tips

1. Only teach something to professional staff after you’ve
   a. Done it successfully yourself
   b. Learned its critical attributes
   c. Become proficient with it yourself
   d. Learned what modifications or alternative approaches or techniques can cause it to fail
   e. Prepared to model it in multiple contexts

2. Keep your learners feeling and believing they are …
a. Successful
b. Right
c. Valued
d. Respected
e. Supported

3. Leave your PD participants wanting more. Use this as your decision screen when planning and executing any professional development.

4. Make it truly okay for your participants to opt out of activities.

5. Frame what you are teaching from the perspective of “ways to solve problems caused by students in learning situations.”

6. Treat people the way they want and need to be treated. The old adage that says, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you” is effective when the “others” have the same personality, experiences and needs that we have – something that is seldom the case.

7. Train and support the pioneers first then the settlers after the pioneers have been truly successful and are ready to fully support the settlers, train the explorers and resisters.

8. Always model what you would like others to learn, value and do.