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A measure of concern

*Research-based program aids innovation
by addressing teacher concerns*

By Karel Holloway

What happens when programs intended to improve student learning aren't successful? Staff carefully researches potential programs, hand-selects one to address the specific needs of the students, and thoroughly prepares teachers. But, once implemented, the innovation doesn't produce the desired results.

Often, researchers say, the problem is not the program, but the way individual educators respond to it.

Each administrator, each principal, each teacher approaches a new program, any change, with a personal set of concerns, researchers have found. Individuals question: *Why should I do this? How long is it going to take me to work through this? I know my kids and I don't think this will work.* Helping educators work through these concerns is crucial in making certain that changes happen.

Just as there are research-based educational innovations, there is a research-based program for aiding innovation — the Concerns-Based Adoption Model or CBAM. It offers a way to understand, then address educators' common concerns about change.

CBAM has other components but the most readily and commonly used is "stages of concern." The ideas were developed in the mid 1970s and many staff developers have integrated the concepts into their work over the past 25 years.

"I run into people all the time who have heard of the stages of concern and kind of keep them in the back of their minds," said Shirley Hord, program manager with the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory. She is one of the principal authors of the system.

Hord said the program is helpful because it is based on research. "We didn't just think this up," Hord said. Through questioning and correlating answers from teachers and college professors about change, Hord and her colleagues identified common concerns that most educators – or any group confronted with change – harbor. Some will go through all the stages, leaving one and moving up to the next. Most will skip around and may have several concerns simultaneously, Hord said.

CBAM's seven stages of concern are:

■ **Awareness:** Aware that an innovation is being introduced but not really interested or con-

Program addresses teacher concerns

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cerned with it.

■ **Informational:** Interested in some information about the change.

■ **Personal:** Wants to know the personal impact of the change.

■ **Management:** Concerned about how the change will be managed in practice.

■ **Consequence:** Interested in the impact on students or the school.

■ **Collaboration:** Interested in working with colleagues to make the change effective.

■ **Refocusing:** Begins refining the innovation to improve student learning results.

Being aware of the concerns allows those in charge of the innovation to tailor aid given to individuals.

"Using the stages of concern, you can get a whole profile," said Gene Hall, one of the CBAM researchers and dean of the college of education at the University of Nevada at Las Vegas. For example, if a leader knows a teacher is concerned about how the innovation will be used in the classroom, that teacher can be given additional preparation or paired with a teacher who is using it well.

ASKING QUESTIONS

Determining a person's stage of concern can be as simple as asking questions, Hord said. Educators can be asked informally during a chance meeting in the hall or in the lunchroom, something Hord calls a "one-legged interview." Or teachers can be asked to respond to open-ended questions as part of the original training. For those interested in building statistical data, teachers can be asked to fill out a survey developed by university researchers. That method is best used only by those who have received training and have a particular need for the data, Hord said.

For most, the informal questions of Hord's "one-legged interview" are the most productive. The questions should be fairly specific: How are your students managing the new math manipulatives?

If a teacher answers, "I haven't really had a chance to use those," the teacher is at the first stage, awareness, not really concerned about the innovation.

A teacher who answers "Mary Jo and I have been working on some ways to let the students use them more for discovery" has reached the collaborative stage.

Teachers can then get the follow-up support for their stages. The first teacher may need retraining to get more information and be impressed with how important the innovation is. The second teacher needs to be encouraged to continue and expand the collaboration.

OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

A more formal way to assess an individual's stage of concern involves asking teachers to respond to an open-ended question. The question can be asked at the beginning of training, the end, or both. Before and after training, teachers can be asked a question such as "What concerns you about the new program?"

If asked before and after, facilitators can see where teachers started and how much movement has occurred. Similarly, when asked at the end, responses indicate what type of follow-up is needed with specific teachers.

USING A QUESTIONNAIRE

Sister Karen Dietrich, principal of the Mt. Saint Joseph Academy near Philadelphia, has used the questionnaire developed by Hord, Hall and their associates and said bar graphs of teacher responses provide comforting proof that technology use is taking hold in her school.

After a technology institute last summer, teachers were asked to fill out a 35-statement survey. Dietrich and a technology facilitator used the results from the 24 responses to address their concerns individually. The teachers filled out the survey again and there was clear movement, Dietrich said.

"When I look at my first 24 bar graphs, there is real density in self concern. In De-

cember, that has clearly spread out. What is so significant is that in eight weeks, there has been clear movement," she said.

The survey and later personal interviews revealed some real surprises, she said. A teacher who had already been using technology to arrange video conferences with a school in England had responses that showed her concerns were at the bottom stages of awareness and informational. "She had the skills, she just needed the confidence," Dietrich said.

Dietrich used the formal survey and is working out statistical data because her results are part of her doctoral dissertation. But she said the informal interviews have been key. Each interview lasts five to 30 minutes. Some of the exchanges have been by e-mail.

Quickly addressing the concern following an interview was important as well, she said. A teacher who can't figure out how to do something may abandon most technology use if not given aid. "They weren't left hanging for weeks or months," she said. While Dietrich has done much of the evaluation and follow-up, she has had help. The school hired a teacher technologist and Dietrich said she sends some responses to her. Other teachers have been referred to other teachers. "We have a culture of teachers helping teachers," she said.

Finding the time to use CBAM has not always been easy, she said. With a limited budget, hiring the technologist took careful planning. And teachers asked to work with other teachers must get the free time to provide help.

CBAM isn't fast but it provides the ongoing, steady support needed to move an innovation forward, she said.

Dietrich said she felt that using the method to assess how the technological innovations were going was a necessity. "We've invested in the technology. If we are going to invest $50,000, $60,000, or $70,000 in new computers and mobile technology, I can't let it go to waste and be covered with dust."

7 Stages of Concern

The Concerns-Based Adoption Model outlines seven Stages of Concern that offer a way to understand and then address educators' common concerns about change.

Stage 0: Awareness
Aware that an innovation is being introduced but not really interested or concerned with it.

- ☐ "I am not concerned about this innovation."
- ☐ "I don't really know what this innovation involves."

Stage 1: Informational
Interested in some information about the change.

- ☐ "I want to know more about this innovation."
- ☐ "There is a lot I don't know about this but I'm reading and asking questions."

Stage 2: Personal
Wants to know the personal impact of the change.

- ☐ "How is this going to affect me?"
- ☐ "I'm concerned about whether I can do this."
- ☐ "How much control will I have over the way I use this?"

Stage 3: Management
Concerned about how the change will be managed in practice.

- ☐ "I seem to be spending all of my time getting materials ready."
- ☐ "I'm concerned that we'll be spending more time in meetings."
- ☐ "Where will I find the time to plan my lessons or take care of the record keeping required to do this well?"

Stage 4: Consequence
Interested in the impact on students or the school.

- ☐ "How is using this going to affect students?"
- ☐ "I'm concerned about whether I can change this in order to ensure that students will learn better as a result of introducing this idea."

Stage 5: Collaboration
Interested in working with colleagues to make the change effective.

- ☐ "I'm concerned about relating what I'm doing to what other instructors are doing."
- ☐ "I want to see more cooperation among teachers as we work with this innovation."

Stage 6: Refocusing
Begins refining the innovation to improve student learning results.

- ☐ "I have some ideas about something that would work even better than this."

> "Everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing himself."
>
> — Leo Tolstoy

Address Individual Concerns

To help bring about change, you first must know an individual's concerns. Then those concerns must be addressed. While there are no set formulas, here are some suggestions for addressing the stages of concern.

Stage 0: Awareness concerns
- [ ] If possible, involve teachers in discussions and decisions about the innovation and its implementation.
- [ ] Share enough information to arouse interest, but not so much it overwhelms.
- [ ] Acknowledge that a lack of awareness is expected and reasonable and that there are no foolish questions.

Stage 1: Informational concerns
- [ ] Provide clear and accurate information about the innovation.
- [ ] Use several ways to share information — verbally, in writing, and through available media. Communicate with large and small groups and individuals.
- [ ] Help teachers see how the innovation relates to their current practices — the similarities and the differences.

Stage 2: Personal concerns
- [ ] Legitimize the existence and expression of personal concerns.
- [ ] Use personal notes and conversations to provide encouragement and reinforce personal adequacy.
- [ ] Connect these teachers with others whose personal concerns have diminished and who will be supportive.

Stage 3: Management concerns
- [ ] Clarify the steps and components of the innovation.
- [ ] Provide answers that address the small specific "how-to" issues.
- [ ] Demonstrate exact and practical solutions to the logistical problems that contribute to these concerns.

Stage 4: Consequence concerns
- [ ] Provide individuals with opportunities to visit other settings where the innovation is in use and to attend conferences on the topic.
- [ ] Make sure these teachers are not overlooked. Give positive feedback and needed support.
- [ ] Find opportunities for these teachers to share their skills with others.

Stage 5: Collaboration concerns
- [ ] Provide opportunities to develop skills for working collaboratively.
- [ ] Bring together, from inside and outside the school, those who are interested in working collaboratively.
- [ ] Use these teachers to assist others.

Stage 6: Refocusing concerns
- [ ] Respect and encourage the interest these individuals have for finding a better way.
- [ ] Help these teachers channel their ideas and energies productively.
- [ ] Help these teachers access the resources they need to refine their ideas and put them into practice.

Source: *Taking Charge of Change,* by Shirley Hord, William Rutherford, Leslie Huling-Austin, and Gene Hall, ASCD, 1987.

"If we don't change the direction we're going, we're likely to end up where we are headed."

— Chinese proverb

Four A's text protocol

Adapted from Judith Gray, Seattle, WA 2005

Purpose: This protocol engages readers in responding to and analyzing text as they read. Use this protocol while reading "A measure of concern."

Time: Approximately 30 minutes.

Materials: Text for participants.

Steps:

1. The group reads the text silently, highlighting it and writing notes in the margin on post-it notes in answer to the following four questions (you can also add your own A's).
   - What Assumptions does the author of the text hold?
   - What do you Agree with in the text?
   - What do you want to Argue with in the text?
   - What parts of the text do you want to Aspire to?
2. In a round, have each person identify one assumption in the text, citing the text (with page numbers, if appropriate) as evidence.
3. Either continue in rounds or facilitate a conversation in which the group talks about the text in light of each of the remaining "A"s, taking them one at a time – what do people want to argue with, agree with, and aspire to in the text? Try to move seamlessly from one "A" to the next, giving each "A" enough time for full exploration.
4. End the session with an open discussion framed around a question such as: What does this mean for our work with students?
5. Debrief the text experience.

Source: National School Reform Faculty, www.nsrfharmony.org. Used with permission.

Four A's protocol note-taking form

Assumptions	Agreements

Arguments	Aspirations