The Challenge of Change

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Edited by Edward Grube and Sharon Stadtwald
Lutheran Education Association
August 2012
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A two-year-old child has more neural connections than an adult. Each bit of information collected by the senses results in a new neural connection. Starting about age three, the brain begins a process of change that hopefully creates order out of neural chaos. Learning creates a physical change in our brain (Diamond & Hopson, 1998). Our understanding of the brain and how it develops shows us that God created us to change. And yet, part of us wants to avoid change, to remain in the realm of the known where we are comfortable and in control.

Is change necessary?
“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it” (Isaiah 55:10–11).

God designed us to change, and He uses His word and sacraments to accomplish this change. It is interesting to note the mood of the verse that follows:

“For you shall go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands” (Isaiah 55:12).

Note the response to the effectiveness of the Word: joy, peace, and singing. God does not promise a lack of stress in the change process; instead, He promises effectiveness and peace.

The reality of our world is that God does not change. His word does not change, but everything else is up for grabs. When we, as workers in God’s kingdom, act as salt to preserve and enhance what is good, and shine a light on what needs to change, we are not making changes for the sake of change but rather are evaluating needs and using the tools God provided to make necessary and beneficial change.

Children in our schools grow up in a world different from ours. Their brains have been shaped by different experiences; their world offers different tools and different opportunities. When we watch very young children adeptly manipulate electronic media, we realize that the definition of learning has changed. When we were young, we understood that turning a page brought new learning. Our current students grow up in a world where the swipe of fingers over a screen creates new opportunity; the early experiences of these children wire their brains to expect learning in a different way.

Technology is not the only change that educators face. Each generation of students comes to the classroom with different learning needs and strengths. Teaching methods and curriculum cannot assume that each generation is raised the same way and builds on similar experiences. Schools must realize that learners are more visual, that they have more to distract them, and that they grow up in a world where keeping factual information in one’s head is not as important as knowing how to find it on the Internet (Elmore, 2010). Children still need to develop physically, academically, cognitively,
emotionally, and spiritually, but they are living in, and preparing for, a world very different from the one in which their teachers were raised. Schools need to change, not just to stay competitive but to best serve their students.

There is another reason why change is important: to model life-long learning for students. When children see teachers trying new things, sometimes succeeding and sometimes trying again, the process of learning is modeled in a way that children can understand. Teachers become a coping model—a model that demonstrates how to solve problems, how to learn gradually, and how to learn from mistakes. Students come to realize that learning does not stop when school is over, that learning is about trial and error, and that mistakes and challenges are sources of learning rather than a cause for shame. Learning is change, and change is learning.

How does change happen?
As you can well imagine, there is a wealth of research on the process of change. Much of that research is summarized in Everett M. Rogers’ book *Diffusion of Innovations* (2003). This monograph will outline two major concepts as described in Rogers’ book: the process of innovation and the characteristics of those who participate in change. These concepts lead to an understanding of how to effect change and how to encourage those involved in the change process.

An innovation is any idea, practice, or object that is new to a group of people. An innovation comes about because of a perceived need or problem. An innovation begins through discussion, the problem solving-process, and interaction with ideas used by other groups. The process of adopting an innovation typically follows five steps: knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation.

**Step 1 Knowledge**
At this stage, the participants become aware of the innovation and learn of its functions. This stage is relatively short or rather involved, depending on the innovation. It is crucial to the process of change, as the group members must individually adopt the innovation. This becomes quite complicated when the individuals work together as a group, such as a church, school, or child development center staff. Each individual must have access to knowledge about the innovation. Because each member will learn in his or her own best way, this knowledge should be available in several forms and over a length of time. This body of knowledge regarding the innovation will serve as the foundation for decisions regarding the change, as well as support for implementation. If you wish to introduce a new technology tool, for example, establish several types and times for training. Additionally, the organization members need to have long-term, convenient access to knowledge about the tool for when subsequent questions arise.

**Step 2 Persuasion**
During this step, attitudes toward the innovation are formed. Will the innovation be advantageous? How does it compare to current practice and values? How complex is it? How easy is it to try? How observable is it? These are the questions wrestled with in this step. This is the gathering of information needed to make judgments about the innovation. The attitude toward the innovation must be positive, or the innovation process will not continue successfully. Some members of the team may stay at this stage...
Participants in the change process need to see the relevance of the change, both to themselves and to their students. They also need to believe that change is possible. If, for instance, a school wants to implement a new discipline system, each member needs to see how that program will improve his/her job, as well as how it will help children learn better. They also need to believe that the program will be effective. These issues need to be addressed and not just implied in the change process.

Step 3 Decision
Having achieved a positive attitude toward the innovation, the decision to incorporate the innovation is made, and the process of change can begin. At this stage, activities that indicate an acceptance of change are seen. Questions regarding the innovation change from informational to procedural. Those who have rejected the innovation may hamper the process or may make a change in appearance only. As an illustration, a teacher who was outwardly persuaded to accept individual computers in the classroom but has yet to decide that this is a worthwhile change, may neglect to integrate the new technology into the learning process, allowing the students to use the computers only when other work is finished or using them only as electronic workbooks.

Step 4 Implementation
At this stage, the innovation has been accepted and is now being used. This includes the beginning stages of trial implementation, as well as later stages where the innovation is adapted for local use. This stage can look very different for each individual in the change process. For some, this stage comes easily; for others it is slow and deliberate. The importance of this stage is that progress is made. This process needs to be clear and consistent. For example, when implementing a new on-line grading program, each member of the organization needs to understand what changes will happen and when they will be expected to comply. This stage requires monitoring, as each member is held accountable for the change.

Step 5 Confirmation
This stage is part of the evaluation process for innovation. At this stage, individuals, as well as the group, compare results of the innovation to previous practice. Stages four and five are part of an iterative process wherein the innovation may be re-invented and then re-implemented and re-evaluated to adapt to local needs or to correct earlier negative consequences. When a teacher changes grade level, for example, this yearlong change should be monitored and discussed over an extended period. If the change has not happened to the satisfaction of those involved, the situation should be adjusted to accomplish all desired goals. In other words, don’t just make a change and walk away assuming all is fine. There always are opportunities to evaluate and refine the change process.

There is nothing difficult to understand about this five-step process. In fact, most of us involved in organizations that need to change could identify similar steps from our own experience. If these five steps are followed thoroughly, then change happens effectively. The biggest mistake made in effecting change happens when skimming or skipping steps two, three, and five.

Steps one and four are the concrete stages of change. We can understand the need for knowledge of an innovation, and in our world of Internet information, can usually access it in several different forms. Implementation
also is a tangible process. A leader can work with a group to develop a step-
by-step plan for adopting the new practice or tool. Persuasion, decision, and
confirmation are a bit more tenuous. It may not always be possible to know
if someone has been persuaded. Likewise an individual may outwardly
agree to a decision but not comply in practice. It is also tempting to omit
the evaluation stage of a change. Often, much time and many other re-
sources have already been devoted to this change, and the leader is perhaps
ready to move on to the next challenge. Neglecting these three steps can
have devastating effects on the process.

As an illustration, perhaps your staff perceives a need to stay current in the
use of electronic technology. Research indicates that each classroom should
be outfitted with a particular tool. Time is spent teaching each member how
to use the tool, but not all believe that the new tool is necessary or even
wise. While those who are persuaded will embrace the new technology and
find inventive ways to use it, the tools will go unused in the classrooms of
those not quite persuaded. There may be many reasons given, such as a lack
of time, a need for help, interruption of service, etc. However, a lack of
persuasion regarding the need and effectiveness of the tool is merely keep-
ning these people from finding a solution to these concerns. Ignoring this
step makes the innovation ineffective.

In another scenario, a school may choose a new curriculum. Each staff
member is given ample information regarding the new curriculum. Each
may be persuaded of the need for this change and that moving in this direc-
tion will accomplish the shared goal. However, if some members of the
team do not work toward implementing the decision, the result will be an
ineffective change. Such members might adopt the new curriculum but re-
tain large portions of the old methods. If the new curriculum entails a major
philosophical shift, then the combination of old and new will not accom-
plish the goal. Such individuals were persuaded of the need to change but
did not make the decision or take sufficient action to change.

Even if steps one through four are accomplished successfully, but step five
is ignored, a similar result of impeded change can occur. For example,
many schools work toward developing and implementing a bullying policy.
This is an important and complicated issue that needs to be addressed from
many aspects. Careful work to gain knowledge, to develop a policy, to per-
suade members of the potential for the policy, and to encourage the deci-
sion to use and to effectively implement the policy are all important to its
success. Because bullying involves the victim, the perpetrator, bystanders,
and adult monitors as well as motive and opportunity, many factors need to
be monitored and controlled. If a staff implements a new policy but never
evaluates that policy for effectiveness, this can lead people to think enough
has been done. Ineffective innovations can also sabotage future efforts to
bring about change if people are left thinking all the work put into one pro-
ject did no good anyway.

Steps four and five need to become an iterative process wherein the group
moves back and forth from implementation to evaluation and possible ad-
aptation. In addition, continuing support and education are vital. An innova-
tion will not last if people cannot sustain it. If a new procedure for dealing
with bullies is implemented, but the same students continue to bully in spite
of the change, an evaluation of the procedure might reflect that too much
attention applies to consequences for bully behavior and not enough atten-
tion to motivation and opportunity. This should lead to a refinement of the

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**Five Steps in the Process of Adopting an Innovation**

1. **Knowledge**
2. **Persuasion**
3. **Decision**
4. **Implementation**
5. **Confirmation**
original program or a re-invention of the innovation.

The evaluation step is important for another reason; a failed change is damaging in many respects. A failed change not only fails to solve the initial problem but also has consequences in terms of the motivations of the organization members. In the face of a less than satisfactory change, those who are leery of change now have further reason to avoid innovation. They may develop an attitude that real change is not possible, so effort in that area is wasted. Those leading change will find that the next proposed change will be met with even stronger overt and covert resistance. A plan for change needs to include a plan to evaluate and refine that change.

How do individuals react to change?
The research that Rogers collected identified five different types of individuals involved in the process of change. In a large system change, involving hundreds of people, all types will be represented. In a small system change, such as a school or center staff, all types may not be evident. The five types include: innovator, early adopter, early majority, late majority, and laggards. Most people will find themselves in the early- and late-majority categories. The laggards typically are the biggest challenge in a change situation, and the early adopters are crucial to creating change. Once the late majority begins to climb on the bandwagon, change continues at a quick pace. Each type has specific characteristics that define them and are important to consider when orchestrating change.

1. Innovators
This is a very small group, and contrary to common logic, not a group that has much influence over the others. An innovator actively seeks information about new ideas. An innovator typically has a high level of education (may be self-educated) and many contacts outside the organization and local system. In a school, the innovators would probably have a Master’s degree or expertise in a field such as technology or remediation. Innovators would seek out conferences and maintain friendships with similar people outside of the school, such as a district or national level committee. They may be financing innovations in their own classroom rather than waiting for the change to catch on. Innovators have strong emotional resources in that they are eager for a challenge, solve problems effectively, and are comfortable with uncertainty. Their contribution to the change process is to kick-start change with the new ideas they find outside of the system. They are not likely to lead change, but their willingness to try new things needs to be recognized and appreciated by administration, or those less comfortable with change will feel threatened by what an innovator does. An innovator, for example, might implement a different teaching strategy, such as project-based learning in his/her classroom. While this teacher might find success for this approach, the change in this one classroom will be likely to create tension among other staff members. The innovator finds and tries the innovation but is not likely to be the one to encourage change.

2. Early Adopters
Early adopters tend to be better educated and have more exposure to people and activities outside the system. They are fairly comfortable with uncertainty and have strong support from, and a strong connection to, people within the system. This group serves as coping models for others interested in trying the new idea. They have respect from the other groups and can
This group serves as coping models for others interested in trying the new idea. They have respect from the other groups and can serve as an opinion leader.

serve as an opinion leader. In a school system, these people would be teachers who probably have an advanced degree, as well as recognition within the group for some area of expertise. They are willing to try something new and are comfortable talking about what works and does not work. Other teachers trust their opinion. They need access to knowledge about the change and support from the administration to be put into a leadership position, as they are able to decrease levels of uncertainty for others on staff. When an early adopter tries something new, such as communicating with parents using social media, other teachers will be interested, will ask questions, and may be inspired to use this method on a trial basis. The early adopter encourages people to put a toe into the water to test the temperature.

3. Early Majority
This is the first large group. When they do accept the change, the tipping point for others to adopt is reached and change begins to move through the system. This group is less comfortable with uncertainty but can make a change if they have good models. They are much more thoughtful and deliberate in decision making and are good observers. On a school staff, this group would be people not interested in a higher degree or those who obtained a degree but do not show evidence of change in their practices. This group is a bit more skeptical about the need or efficacy of change. Their tendency toward deliberation indicates they might have good insight into possible consequences of the change. They need knowledge about the innovation and support in problem solving. Early majority members may balk at the use of a new standardized test, for example, but with support and confidence that the change has possibilities, they will seek out more information and training. The early majority creates the environment that brings in the next group.

4. Late Majority
This group is the second large group and, together with the early majority, make up more than half of the people in a system. Once this group has accepted the innovation, it is easy, albeit incorrect, to assume that the work of change is done. The people in this group learn primarily by observing others. They are uncomfortable with uncertainty and need persuasion to accept an innovation. This group can be helpful in the evaluation process, as they can identify problems with the change. These teachers propose the most objections to change, but, if their contribution is respected, they can help to re-invent the innovation to better suit the situation. Attending to the concerns and needs of this group helps to reduce anxiety and promote thoughtful planning. As an example, when a school moves from daytime parent/teacher conferences to evening time slots, the late majority can identify which parents will find this inconvenient. When their concerns are addressed, the change will move forward with more success. If the change is not successful and sustained, people in this group can become laggards and will remember the innovation as evidence of why change is useless.

5. Laggards
Like innovators and early adopters, laggards make up a small number of the people in a system. They are highly resistant to change, difficult to persuade, and likely to find ways to avoid real change. They are highly resistant to change, difficult to persuade, and likely to find ways to avoid real change. These members are typically not interested in higher education, unwilling to attend workshops or other training, not encouraged by colleagues’ successes, very uncomfortable with uncertainty, and afraid of failure. Laggards, for instance, see little benefit from attending a national conference and may be successful in convincing others that such an event is not worth the time and expense. They
need the benefits of change pointed out on a routine basis. As staff members, even though they can be consistently good in their preferred methods, they are typically the ones most in need of change but without the skills and attitude to make it happen. They will change when there is no alternative. If the change is successful, the laggards inadvertently convince others of the benefit of change. If change is unsuccessful, the group of laggards will probably gain new members.

### Characteristics of Types Involved in Organizational Change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Resources</th>
<th>Emotional Resource</th>
<th>Contribution</th>
<th>Need</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Innovators (small number)</td>
<td>Seek out new ideas</td>
<td>Exposure to education and people outside system; ability to try new things</td>
<td>Mastery learner, not afraid of a challenge; comfortable with uncertainty</td>
<td>Bring in new ideas</td>
<td>To be respected; need outside exposure opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early adopters (small number)</td>
<td>Share opinions about idea; lead change</td>
<td>Exposure to education and people outside the system</td>
<td>Connected to people in system, but comfortable with challenge and uncertainty</td>
<td>Give advice and information; coping models</td>
<td>Support as leader and support to make change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early majority (1/3 of members)</td>
<td>Create tipping point</td>
<td>Enjoy popular support within the system</td>
<td>More uncomfortable with uncertainty but can change with models</td>
<td>Deliberate in decision making</td>
<td>Support in making change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late majority (1/3 of members)</td>
<td>Make change part of system</td>
<td>Good observers</td>
<td>Uncomfortable with change but can be persuaded with support</td>
<td>Provide evaluation feedback</td>
<td>Support and participation in re-invention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laggards (small number)</td>
<td>Will only change when they have to</td>
<td>Consistent in their current system</td>
<td>Very uncomfortable with, and doubtful of, possibility of change</td>
<td>Can solidify others realization of need for change</td>
<td>Strongest need to make the change</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
General Characteristics of Early and Late Changers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Easy to change</th>
<th>Slow to change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Education priority</td>
<td>- Does not seek or make use of education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Seek friendships outside of organization</td>
<td>- Friendships primarily within system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Attend conferences</td>
<td>- Dogmatic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Empathetic</td>
<td>- Fatalistic view of mistakes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Abstract reasoning is stronger</td>
<td>- With encouragement toward a proper attitude can be helpful to evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Hopeful</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

While temperament, personality, and experience are all factors that determine into which category a person falls, age is not a factor. Each category can contain people from various age groups, and people are not likely to become more or less innovative as time goes on. Easy changers are more empathetic, which means they are better abstract thinkers. An abstract thinker can imagine him/herself doing something new and can then develop a plan to achieve the goal. Empathy is a strong characteristic used by those who are good at encouraging and supporting others in change.

As seen in the description, early adapters not only value education but put it to good use. While others may pursue higher education for the financial benefits, they may not put it to use if change puts them at risk of setbacks or failures. They may put great time and effort into an advanced degree but show no appreciable change in teaching practice. Those who are slow to change see mistakes as a threat to their image rather than a challenge with potential learning. This creates intolerance for uncertainty. They will be reluctant to change until that uncertainty has been relieved to a certain degree. This kind of atmosphere might push those more comfortable with change to seek out contacts outside of the organization. They look for like-minded people and, in the process, are exposed to more ideas as well as techniques for supporting change.

Slow changers also tend to be more dogmatic. The threat they feel about uncertainty can be masked in aggressive assertions that the change is wrong. Easy changers will balance that attitude with hope and optimism. When we see these characteristics from a basis of faith we have an interesting dynamic. It is important for an administrator who encourages change to defend that change in light of faith and appropriate practice. This needs to be done repeatedly and patiently to inspire confidence. If a decision is made through Godly guidance and prayer, then the hope that the early changers display is an assurance to those who are deliberating the change.

What promotes change?
Most change requires a change agent. A change agent is not typically an innovator but rather an administrator or organizer who sees the benefit in a change brought to the group by an innovator. A change agent is the one

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who plans for the change, monitors the progress through various steps, and evaluates the effectiveness of change. A change agent also needs to be aware of others in the organization, their needs, and how to meet them. While the change agent introduces change, the bulk of his/her responsibility is in the facilitation of change. It is not enough to take care of the knowledge and implementation steps of change; the individual members of the organization need attention, and the effectiveness of the change needs to be determined. The primary responsibilities of the change agent are to reduce uncertainty and demonstrate prudent judgment.

While an individual staff member is unlikely to make a dramatic change from one end of the continuum to the other, there can be a shift of population. For example, one person might be a laggard when it comes to technology change but more willing when curriculum or policy change is proposed.

Here are eight suggestions to gently shift a staff toward change:

**Motivation**

There are three aspects of motivation that contribute to an individual’s willingness to change or comfort with change. These three aspects are a part of personality but not temperament. This means that they are aspects of motivation acquired through experience and can be adapted. In fact, they need to be adapted for change to be effective. People need to believe that A) change is possible, B) that they are capable of making change happen, and C) that mistakes are an opportunity to learn.

A) Belief that change is possible: Some people work under the impression that they were born with certain skills or personality traits and that they cannot improve (Dweck, 2008). Such people are leery of change because it can expose a weakness in their skill level. These characteristics are part of a fixed mindset. Because they believe they cannot improve, the exposure of such a weakness would be devastating. This detrimental mindset can be changed when people find themselves in an environment where praise is given for effort, for problem solving, for being brave enough to try something new, and not for performance. Praise for performance tends to increase the anxiety related to uncertainty.

B) Individual capability for change: Individuals must believe they have the capacity to make change happen. If they are passive regarding change, they work from the idea that others are in control of what happens or that things are subject to fate (Rotter, 1966). Individuals need to be active participants in change—in action and attitude. When members of an organization are included in the change process, are reminded of what choices they have, discouraged from using absolutes (“this will never work,” “we have always done it this way”), and encouraged to make a list of the actions they can take if the first attempt fails, they will be encouraged to see how they can be a positive part of change instead of feeling like change is happening irrespective of their concerns. It is also important to show respect for the unique knowledge of individual members. This encourages more participation and makes for better decisions and evaluations.

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...show respect for the unique knowledge of individual members.
C) Mistakes as an opportunity to learn: The primary reason for individuals to feel uncomfortable with uncertainty lies in their reaction to mistakes. Regardless of motivation or attitude, everyone can benefit from reminders that mistakes are an opportunity to learn. This is an easy motivation to describe, but a complicated one to understand. As people of faith, we have a different view of mistakes. We understand that we are sinners in a sinful world and that we cannot change this fact. God provides repentance and forgiveness as tools for approaching mistakes. From God’s love and mercy we understand that mistakes are to be faced, forgiven, and considered fruitful. Each mistake is an opportunity for mercy and grace. Each mistake reminds us of God’s unconditional love. Each mistake is an opportunity for God to teach. In light of this truth, organization members should discuss disappointments along with successes in order to shift the focus by dwelling less on failure and more on developing wisdom.

Working with this motivation can do much to move slow changers toward the other end of the continuum. Slower changers will be more willing to try a change if they have less to fear from mistakes. A change agent also will find there is less tension between the innovators and the late majority, allowing the innovators more influence on the process. The primary resistance to change is the fear of looking less than capable. An understanding that problem solving, through the work of the Spirit and not individual performance is what makes us capable, goes a long way toward reducing uncertainty.

Education
How does your organization value education? Is help available for those who want to earn an advanced degree? Are teachers encouraged to self-educate through conferences, webinars, books, and other forms of self-study? Take care to promote education for its own sake and not because it is rewarded. A teacher who is intrinsically motivated to gain education is more likely to use the new information in the classroom over a teacher who works for recognition or other reward. A change agent’s goal is teachers who use education to improve practice.

Remember that different individuals learn in different ways. It is useful to have a broad understanding of how people learn and how the classrooms and students benefit from learning. For instance, taking on a project to re-write a science curriculum or rework a discipline system may not involve taking a class but will result in learning, and this should be valued too.

Encourage staff members to set goals for learning and to identify steps needed to achieve the goal.

Encourage staff members to set goals for learning and to identify steps needed to achieve the goal. They should have an opportunity to share these goals and new learning with other staff members. This gives all members an important understanding of the benefit of the process of learning. If one teacher shares frustrations, problem solving, and effort, other teachers see that they can be good learners, even if they do not succeed at first try.

Discussion
Discussion is an important part of learning. When members of a staff have opportunities to discuss issues and ideas, they learn to see things in a more abstract way. A good discussion, in an open environment that promotes
A good discussion, in an open environment that promotes problem solving and discourages criticism, helps participants to evaluate what they believe in comparison to the beliefs of others. This strengthens abstract thinking by giving new perspectives and by helping people to encode their learning. A continuous practice of discussion also works to teach those uncomfortable with uncertainty that change is risky work that is worth the effort.

Encouragement
While it is easy to see that people in the laggard and late majority categories need encouragement, this may not be the best tactic; encouragement can sometimes cause anxiety. Later adopters learn best from watching models and following leaders. They also benefit from activities that help to reduce their fear of making a mistake. Remember to encourage your early adopters and early majority staff members to take on leadership responsibility and to model change. When someone is trying something new, they often learn best from a coping model. An exemplary model can be discouraging because it may be too hard for newcomers to see themselves as ever being that skilled. A coping model, who makes mistakes, solves problems, and survives mistakes is a model who teaches that it is possible to improve and grow. A change agent needs to value the work of innovators and early adopter leaders, making note of effort and willingness to change rather than praising accomplishments. It is important to teach those slow to change that implementation has its ups and downs but this can be overcome and that improvement is more important than comfort.

Empathy
When there is awareness that different people react in different ways to change, the process of developing empathy for each person has begun. Just as it is unwise to assume that knowledge about an innovation is all it takes to successfully implement that innovation, it also is unwise to assume that each staff member requires the same amount of time, same training, and same kind of support. It is important for a change agent to listen and watch for successes and struggles and to work to meet the needs of each staff member.

Empathy is especially important in steps two and three of the change process. Each member of the group needs to be persuaded not only of the importance of the innovation but also of how they fit into the picture. Some need time to observe before they try; others need permission to create appropriate ways to adapt the change. Some take a change and run with it, while others require monitoring to see that the change has been implemented.

Connectedness
Those in the teaching profession find it easy to confine themselves to the classroom, or for a staff to focus solely on their own school. We want Lutheran schools to be parochial in that they teach God’s Word. We do not want Lutheran schools to be parochial in the sense that they have a limited or narrow outlook or scope. God’s Word applies to everything. When we connect with other teachers, with other schools, with people doing this work in different settings, we become aware of new ideas and issues. Exposure to the ideas and experiences of other people can be accomplished in many ways: bring in speakers, team up with others to discuss books, create a partnership with a school very different from your own, and communicate via technology. In one way or another, move people out of their classrooms and into the world.

God’s Word applies to everything. When we connect with other teachers, with other schools, with people doing this work in different settings, we become aware of new ideas and issues.
Encourage staff members to maintain membership in professional organizations, especially those that encourage interaction. Social media discussion opportunities, webinars, and both small and large conferences go far to expose teachers to new ideas and to alert them to new things to consider in their own classrooms and schools. Attending a national level conference both encourages a teacher to continue doing what works and to think in new ways about what does not work. These events develop education and expand perspectives. They also strongly motivate people to see that change and improvement are possible.

**Observation**

The change agent must monitor each step of the process of change. Remember that knowledge and implementation are the steps that can be planned and evaluated easily. Find ways to monitor persuasion and decision. Much of persuasion can be accomplished in group discussions that allow people to share their successes and confess their fears and concerns. These kinds of discussions also allow late majority and laggards to realize when the tide is turning. The decision process is monitored through individual accountability. Be sure that each staff member has a plan and is accountable to either the change leader or to another staff member. This contributes to teaching individuals how to self-regulate change.

**Evaluation**

Once staff members have been trained, persuaded, and held accountable—and implementation has been completed, the work of change has just begun. It is important to plan to evaluate the change and its consequences. Consider using a systematic data collection method such as action research. This is a non-threatening yet methodical way of evaluating and planning for improvement. It can be used at any point in the process of change (Sagor, 2011). Most innovations need to be re-invented to work effectively in different environments and with different people. Collect and analyze data regarding the change to assure that things are going well for all involved. If there is trouble, then the situation needs to be appropriately addressed or the benefits of the innovation may be lost.

“Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:13).

The act of change requires us to prepare our minds for action. Our world teaches that change is necessary, but our faith reminds us that change must be efficacious and in line with Godly teaching. Additionally, a program for change includes both the group and the individuals. The change must be relevant to both or failure is likely. It is also good to remember that change is enhanced by fellowship, empathy, and evaluation. Change should involve all members of the organization, working together, discussing, observing, and modeling. Those administrating change benefit from the reminder that empathy will help to see what each member requires to make a commitment to change. And at each step of the way, change should be evaluated and, if need be, re-invented. Through God’s help, we meet the challenges of ministry in our world.

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come” (2 Corinthians 5: 17).
The gift of change is a blessing. Grace means that Christ fulfilled the law for us and His blood changes us—makes us a new creation. God works in us and through us for the sustenance of His work. We can take heart and know that God is with us when we work through change, especially as we do so in faith and prayer.

Resources
_______ (2011). A magazine is an iPad that does not work. YouTube. Retrieved from http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aXVyaFmQmNk

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