

Naming and Managing Change

As a school leader it is your primary responsibility to move teacher practice by directly naming the changes that must occur and managing those changes appropriately. This involves being clear about the qualitative (ETHOS) and quantitative deliverables, and managing against them to improve teachers' capacity to deliver strong student outcomes.

How do you manage change effectively?

Prioritize Based on Outcomes & Deliverables

Prioritize changes based on scholar outcomes and deliverables. While there may be many things that require improvement, use the root cause to target the most impactful change, that if improved would close gaps and net the greatest gains for the teacher and scholars.

Name the Change

Do not be constructivist here, rather be the boss. Directly and clearly name the changes to adult practice that must occur to improve scholar performance. Here, you must clearly tie teacher actions to scholar outcomes. It's imperative for adults to understand how their practice affects scholars' ability to be successful.

Outline the HOW

It is not enough to simply name what needs to improve. You also must tell teachers how to close the gap and get it done. Clearly outline what they need to do as teachers, and what you will do as the leader to support them in making gains.

Follow Up & Accountability

Adults must be held accountable to the deliverables and outcomes set forth. Put the onus on teachers to follow up with you. Outline what follow up and accountability will look like— scholar work-study, planning meeting, observations, etc.— and when they are expected to have made growth, and when they are expected to have mastered.

Best Practices

Prioritize Team

When possible, manage change on a team level rather than classroom-by-classroom. This allows you as the leader to be

more effective and efficient with your time.

Be Direct

Avoid words and phrases like “you could,” “maybe try,” “think about doing,” etc. This type of language messages the feedback as a suggestion. Say directly what needs to change.

Assignments

Use assignments to move teacher practice and manage change. Based on the root cause and the gap you’re working to close, have teachers participate in a task that will help them recognize the necessity of the change, and build their capacity to implement it successfully.

Discuss First, Then Capture in Writing

There should never be a situation where you are more direct over email than you are in person— in other words, don’t hide behind your computer because you are scared of confronting the issue. Leaders must be prepared to mirror the same level of directness regardless of modality.

Short & Sweet

Keep your written next steps concise and to the point. The longer and more verbose they are, the more opportunities there are for misinterpretations.

Note the Positive

People need encouragement, especially when there is a ton of change being demanded of them. So do not forget to deliberately note and express the improvement you see across your school, across grade teams, and by individuals! Positivity does not take away from your gap closing work. Indeed, it gives you more capital in the bank because people know that you recognize the improvements.