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LEADING IMPROVEMENT IN SCHOOLS BY EMBEDDING AND SUSTAINING CHANGE: IT'S ALL ABOUT THE LEARNING
by Lorna Earl

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EDUCATION IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Education is front-page news. It is a "hot" topic. It wasn't always, but it is now. People care about it. They care because since the 1960s it has become increasingly clear that education is the way of social mobility.

How many of us have more education than our parents? Our parents were determined that we would have more education than they did because they saw its potential for changing our futures. Education matters.

As well as the "heat" that it generates, education has an element that I think of as "light" – people think they understand it. They have opinions, they care about it and they get involved in it. They all have personal experience of it. Just like everybody feels qualified as a television critic, everyone feels that he or she has something to say about education. It's important to them.

So, education is centre-stage. People are concerned about it. But there are lots of things that concern people. How is education different? Well, take nuclear power, for example. That might be a topic that generates a similar amount of "heat", but it doesn't have "light" because people don't feel that they understand it.

Similarly, there may be all kinds of things that they know lots about, but they don't really care about them in the same way. Those things don't have the same power as education.

This parallel growth in the perceived importance and understanding of education, across the population, impacts upon us as educators. We are not alone in the experience – it has also happened with changing attitudes to medicine, which have impacted on doctors; it's happened with the justice system and lawyers; it's even happened with politicians.

There is also a growing lack of confidence in what is being **done** in these areas. There is a lot less confidence in public service institutions – like the courts, parliament and schools – than there once was. And there is less confidence in **those who work within those institutions**. That lack of confidence has been verbalised loudly and has attracted regular coverage in the media.

As educators, we have tended to feel hurt, angry, sometimes even victimised, by what people have been saying. We have asked ourselves things like *"Why don't they like us any more?"*; and *"What is all this teacher bashing about?"* In my own country of Canada, and I imagine internationally, some real disconnections have developed between various public institutions and members of the public whom they serve.

For some time, educators have been taking a long, hard look at what has been happening and have been exploring ways to improve things. To some large degree, this has focussed on what our schools do.

IMPROVING SCHOOLING, IN CONTEXT

Across the world, educators have been involved in a search for continuous improvement in the education that we provide in our schools. They are doing this in different contexts, with different emphases and through different responses.

To recognise the importance of context is nothing new. Those of you who are engaged in school improvement programs of various kinds in your own workplaces, will have encountered strong similarities between your experiences and those of other educators. You will know that we can learn a huge amount as we talk about what's going on in other places. You also be aware, however, that other places are different from yours and that things that make sense "there", may not make sense "here", for you.

In the past there have been instances of taking ideas from one place and "parachuting" them into another. However good the ideas, this tends to be a bad move. You need to think about how they fit. And you need to adjust both how you do things and how you think about things as you go along.

As an illustration, in my home province of Ontario, we have a very long tradition of focussing on early literacy programs. My team and I were asked to evaluate new approaches that were introduced in England in this area of education. Historically, English schools had taken a "child-centred" approach to early literacy – based on a belief that children will learn if the conditions are there – rather than relying on direct teaching. A national strategy changed all that, mandating a much more prescribed style of teaching.

When we went to do our first observations of the classrooms in England, I expected the teachers to be pretty upset, in view of the new kind of constraint placed upon them. What I found was the exact opposite. They were excited. They were pleased with it. In our surveys, most teachers thought that what was happening was fantastic.

What was going on here? We certainly didn't expect this kind of response. I started asking questions. Why were they responding in this way? What the teachers told me was that they'd had 15 years of the government saying *"Not good enough, not good enough, not good enough!"*, but not offering any image of what "good enough" looked like. The teachers were finally in an environment where someone was saying *"This is what you should be doing. These are the things that we think are good enough."* And, as they tried them, they found that the new methods could work with their students. So ... they were "winning" on both levels.

I am sure, on the other hand, that we would have had a very different response if we had run similar surveys in Ontario, where the literacy teaching had already been very strong and was based on direct teaching, and where teachers felt supported in what they were doing.

So, you may not always be able to predict the results, but knowing your own context can help you to decide what might make the best fit, before trying to bring it in. A look around will tell you what is working best in a wide range of contexts.

In fact, there is a high degree of consistency. The key initiatives for school improvement are very similar, everywhere I go – from New Mexico to South America; from Asia to Eastern Europe, as well as English speaking countries.

Literacy and numeracy and the basics

It is about literacy and numeracy. But it is also about more than just the basics. It is about "the basics, plus, plus". It's not just about learning to read, or decoding, or handwriting, or the multiplication tables. It's about having control of language and number, as the tools and building blocks that you can use for further learning

Using evidence for decision making in classrooms, in schools, in districts and in systems

This is an area of great professional and personal interest for me. I worry a lot about it. An American educator (Rick Stiggins) said some time ago that our culture is "assessment illiterate". What he meant was that our culture has become increasingly dependent on numbers. We have come to depend on statistics and assessments to govern our decision making, and yet much of the time we have no idea what the numbers actually mean.

We're a little anxious about these numbers, we get caught by them and think of them as the end – as the decision point – rather than as the beginning. An increasing emphasis on "accountability", normally framed in numeric terms, often increases this anxiety. In fact, as educators, it is important for us pay attention to numbers and other data from a range of sources, including:

- the numbers in any kind of assessment;
- the numbers that come from any kind of indicator system; as well as
- the stories that you bring as evidence from your experience in classrooms and in schools.

What makes these things useful in evidence-based decision making is that you make them explicit. Then you can talk about them, come to some agreement about what they mean, and make them the conversation point for the next stage of decision making. And it's in this interpretation that the real power lies.

I would like to suggest that *"What we mean by accountability"*, in this context, is really the conversation that we need to have.

We have come to depend on statistics and assessments to govern our decision making, and yet much of the time we have no idea what the numbers actually mean.

Accountability and performance

There is a recognition that in our schools we have some under-performing students. There is no constant predictor of where this will occur. Schools can be in leafy suburbs, with very "good" children, get very high scores and still be under-performing. Other schools can be in difficult, disadvantaged areas and be high-performing.

The performance of a school is tied to what you are able to do with the students that you have. It is about the value that you add to the learning of those students. And this can result in quite a different "line-up" of schools from the one that you might expect. We need to look at school results not just in terms of how well children do, but in terms of how well schools do with the children they've got.

Teacher quality

The notion of teacher quality is an issue around the world. It's been "in hiding" since about the 1950s, and I think will cause lots of consternation and anxiety, but we have to face it. How many of you educators reading this paper, monitoring your own child's education, have experienced a situation where perhaps s/he has one good teacher, one mediocre teacher and one not-so-good teacher, over a three year span? In general, perhaps you've thought to yourself that this is not too bad, that there is always a balance … unless the bad one is really so bad that you're prepared to speak out.

We need to look at school results not just in terms of how well children do, but in terms of how well schools do with the children they've got.

But is that good enough? Well, first of all, we know that we spend 90 per cent of our dollars on teachers. We also know that they are without question the most important element in the schooling of our children – that the thing that makes a difference to kids' learning is teaching.

Prime Minister Tony Blair in England has said that every youngster is entitled – entitled, I emphasise – to high quality teaching in every subject that s/he studies at school. We will tolerate no less, he says, and he means it. In England, they are starting to address the notion of teacher quality very seriously. As a profession, I believe, we need to start to think about this ourselves.

The father of my grandchildren is a policeman, a cop, a man in blue. One of the things he and I argue about regularly is the notion of "Blue protects blue, right?" – that cops protect their own. In education I think we tend to do the same thing, and I think it's wrong. The only difference is that we're not as recognisable as the policemen are when blue protects blue. But we protect our own, even in circumstances when we know that there are children who may suffer harm, or perhaps more problematically and less obviously, children who are just not learning. Who can justify that?

This raises a whole set of issues about what is teacher quality and how it can be improved. In the early days of our work in England, I watched some really bad lessons. However, I think it's fair to say that, as a result of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, in England now there are very few really bad primary maths and literacy lessons. There are some that are outstanding. Most are quite acceptable. But there aren't very many that are really bad, because it's just not allowed.

The answer from the government, if a teacher has been having trouble making the changes in style of teaching, has been to ask *"How can we help you? What support can we give you? What training can we give you? What resources can we give you? … to help you do it better than you do now?"*

Of course, whether that can be sustained over time remains to be seen.

Teacher-student engagement

I have been involved in a fascinating study with middle years students, continuing into secondary schooling. My team and I have worked with a group of teachers who have been striving to change their practice; to get better at what they think is important instruction and learning for middle years students. As part of that study, I spent a year going into classrooms, following classes as if I were one of the students. I would pick different children each time I went. For example, on a given day when I was observing, I might select Peter as my "target", go to all of his classes, and watch what was going on.

Watching and listening to the teachers in this kind of situation, it was obvious how hard they were trying . They were doing new things, putting in a huge amount of energy together, working in teams. As Lorna Earl, researcher, on one level I could see what the teachers were trying to do. On the other hand, as a member of the class, I still came into the room, I still sat in my chair, maybe in a group maybe in a row, and maybe I got a chance to join in a discussion.

I had a different kind of experience from just being an observer as a "fly-on-the-wall".

You know the pattern you follow as a student: you line up; you wait in line; you get your turn; you get your stuff; you go to the end of the queue, figuratively at least; you come back – it's like your other life as a researcher, when you get on a plane, then get off, and it's taken you somewhere – then you go on to the next line-up.

We watched this for several years. I don't know that we ever penetrated far into what they were feeling about the process, but what it raised for us was the incredible ability that children have developed to do this day after day after day, because they know it's their ticket to the next step. And they do learn things along the way. But to be really and deeply engaged in what they're doing and enthused and excited about it, it has to be about more than the rituals. It is about capturing their imagination within that regularised context.

Learning and Assessment

I spend a lot of time rethinking what I know about learning and assessment. Those of you who wish to pursue your own interest in the area might be interested in a couple of books I have contributed to in the last couple of years. The first one, where I was a co-writer with Louise Stoll and Dean Fink, is called *It's about Learning, and It's about Time*. There's a play on words in the title, of course – meaning that it is about time the focus was on learning and also that it takes time for the learning to occur.

In the book, we tried to explain how important it is that we all become good learners – whether or not the style of learning is familiar or is coming in new forms.

So much has been learned in the last five years or so, about how learning happens and how the mind works. If that is at the core of our "job" as educators, we should be on top of it. We need to be updating as part of a continuous process – learning about it by taking courses, by reading about some of the new cognitive theory, and by engaging in discussion groups with our colleagues and others who can bring new knowledge into our work contexts.

In the book we talk about some of what has been learned in recent times – about learning for students, learning for teachers, learning for leaders, and learning for organisations.

The second one is a book called *Assessment as Learning: Using Classroom Assessment to Maximize Student Learning*, which I finished in 2003. It takes the notion of assessment and says there are three fundamental purposes for assessment:

1 Assessment *of* learning

This is what we have done historically and traditionally in classrooms. We do assessment at the end of something as a way of making clear that children have mastered or not mastered the expectations. We use it as a way of accrediting them. We use it as a way of lining them up – from the good ones, who have "got it", to the ones who have "kind of got it", to the ones who probably "didn't and won't get it".

We translate this into symbols, as grades or marks. These symbolic representations are used by other people to decide where these children will go – whether they will go to university, at the senior level; whether they will be given access to specialist teaching and support in primary school, for example. Such decisions about them have a huge impact on their choices and their future lives.

2 Assessment *for* learning

This is when assessment is used by teachers as a way of making learning visible. It is about helping teachers decide what they will do next, instructionally. It is about enhancing each student's learning as much as possible.

3 Assessment *as* learning

This is what my book is about. It is about an extension of assessment for learning. It is about asking ourselves what we need to do in education to help students take on the role of understanding their own learning. How do we help them to think in meta-cognitive ways? How do we help them learn how to self-monitor, self-reflect and develop a feedback loop to enhance their own learning?

Let me give you an example, in an anecdote that I tell often. My niece is now 16, but when she was about five she came to me one day and said …

"You know Aunt Lorna, all cats are girls and all dogs are boys."

I have since come to realise that a few adults still harbour this belief, deep in their hearts. Listen to them, next time they talk to your cat or your dog – they will call cats "she" and dogs "he"!

So much has been learned in the last five years or so, about how learning happens and how the mind works. If that is at the core of our "job" as educators, we should be on top of it. We need to be updating as part of a continuous process

Be that as it may, at the time, I asked my niece:

"How do you know that cats are girls and dogs are boys?"

"Well," she said, *"you have a cat and she's a girl. Her name's Molly and she's little and smooth, and girls are always smooth. Cats are girls. And there's a dog who lives next door and he's big and he's rough and boys are big and rough. Dogs are boys."*

This is pretty sophisticated logic for a five-year-old. Think about what is going on here. How many of us try, in our classrooms, to get children to a point where they will develop a hypothesis, gather evidence, and then test the hypothesis against the evidence? It helped for her.

Now, I could have told my niece that it's not really like that – that cats can be girls and boys, and so can dogs. And I think she would have accepted it. She likes me. I'm a nice aunt, so she would have said to herself:

"OK, when I'm with Aunt Lorna, I have to remember she believes that cats are boys and girls and that dogs are boys and girls."

How many kids sit in classrooms holding those kinds of thoughts in their heads? In terms of the assessment that we do, I believe that many are saying:

"I'm going to remember this until the test, because that's what the teacher says is true."

Let's go a stage further, though. What does my anecdote tell us about learning?

How do we learn? As a beginning teacher, I learned that we were going to write the wisdom of our knowledge on the slates of those blank minds that we would encounter in our classrooms. We have come to realise that this is not how learning happens. We learn when we try to connect new information with what we currently believe to be true. It's when we make connections, that we make sense of the real world.

So, going back to my story, what I did with my niece at that point was to get out a big book. It was just called *Dogs* – one of those wonderful coffee table books, with pictures of dogs in it and not much else. We turned to a picture of a chihuahua.

"What's this?" I asked.

"*It's a dog."*

"What? Dogs are boys. This one's little and smooth."

"Yes," she said, *"sometimes they can be little and smooth."*

So, one of her criteria went out the window.

We turned to a picture of a big red setter with some puppies.

"Is that a boy or girl?" I asked.

After a long pause, she said *"That could be the dad."*

That's how we come to understand something new. It happens when what we believe to be true is challenged by new information, which isn't consistent and which we can't dismiss. This is just as true for adults as it is for children. In fact, it is a whole lot harder for adults, because we have huge numbers of ideas, which are complex and interconnected, not trivial and simple. And we have a tremendous capacity to think that what we believe to be true is true.

"How do I know it?" we might say. *"I just know it. It's just true. And you may have a different perspective from mine, but if you really saw what I know, you would change your mind, because I'm the one who's got it right."*

Think about it, that's how we keep our lives in order.

Learning is about setting out explicitly some of the things you believe to be true, and being prepared to have them either supported or challenged by new information. Assessment in that framework is the way in which teachers can make learning visible

Learning is about challenging those beliefs. Learning is about setting out explicitly some of the things you believe to be true, and being prepared to have them either supported or challenged by new information. Assessment in that framework is the way in which teachers can make learning visible; about making visible what children believe to be true. We must do that if we are to help them make more productive connections.

At the University of Toronto, there is a Nobel Laureate in Chemistry. A few months ago, talking to a group of secondary school students, he told them that all learning is about seeing patterns – patterns and number, patterns and line, pattern and colour, patterns and language, patterns and sound. And taking that metaphor further, teaching is about bringing into the foreground patterns that are already known, creating the conditions where students can see patterns that we know.

The difference between Nobel Laureates and other people is that Nobel Laureates see patterns

that have never been seen before. If that's what we're trying to do, as teachers, then we need to understand what it is that our students hold to be true. Otherwise, what will happen? If we don't know what it is that they are seeing, we may just keep on adding information. And if it doesn't "fit", then they will make it fit in any way they can, or they will dismiss it as not relevant, not important or not connected.

Professional learning communities and networks

If that is how learning happens, then the principles apply to adults as much as to students. As adults, educators, professionals in our field, we need the same opportunities to make explicit what we believe to be true – sometimes even to ourselves. We have to say it out loud, to have it thought about, considered, investigated by other people in our own profession – in our own school, in other schools and, in my own case, in the wider profession of research. We need to take on board what people are learning about our field more broadly.

That means coming to the profession with a totally different view. Currently, there is still an assumption that once you're a teacher you're the expert. That remains true as much for the younger teachers who have come into education more recently, as for those of my generation. Little has really changed in that regard. You are the teacher. The children are always going to know less than you, except maybe in the computer realm.

Things are starting to change, however, and I believe the change will gather pace rapidly. Rather than seeing ourselves as "the experts", knowing more than anyone else in our field, we must be prepared to see ourselves as continuous learners. We have a tiny piece of a puzzle, even if it's a bigger piece than other people around us have. There is a whole canvas that we want to try to understand over time.

EMBEDDING AND SUSTAINING CHANGE

In the policy domain, policy makers tend to operate in two ways.

1 **They are in search of freshness, innovation and new ideas that show imagination.**

They want to demonstrate that what they are doing is new, better than what was there before. However, they also need to develop a political context that creates some coherence over time – which lets us see the connections among the various initiatives, innovations and directions. All too often, that flies in the face of political exigencies.

So, in the educational arena, it sometimes falls to school leaders to form and lead those connections, in ways that keep feet on the ground without dismissing good ideas. As the leaders and implementers in education, we must also ensure that we are doing is not just throwing everything up in the air and starting over each time.

I think that in general we have done this side of things well.

2 **Governments and policy makers can ensure reasonable resource allocation, to make things happen.**

Sometimes they do one or both of these things; sometimes they don't. And as educators we need to know that they may or may not actually follow through. In either case, we will need to maintain the quality of education that is provided.

In the "new orthodoxy", rather than having resource allocations that would make initiatives happen, things tended to go in the other direction. Policy makers found ways to pull money out of education. The emphasis was on doing more with less. Currently, the wheel seems to be turning. As I visit systems around the world, I am starting to see more interest in putting money into education.

This takes us back to where I started this paper. I think there is now a strong push by families and parents, into the political realm, saying that education matters. And that it matters enough to support it. As professionals, there are many ways in which we can support this. We can do a huge job in terms of simple public relations.

As adults, educators, professionals in our field, we need the same opportunities to make explicit what we believe to be true – sometimes even to ourselves. We have to say it out loud, to have it thought about, considered, investigated by other people in our own profession

we need to rethink what we mean by "sustainable change". What we need now is ***sustainable capacity*** *for change*

In saying this, I am keenly aware of the need for us to generate a positive image. As I said earlier, many educators feel bruised by some of the public perceptions of the profession, but we need to be very careful about how we respond to that.

Recently I was at a public sporting event near my home. There was a group of people sitting behind me that included some teachers, as became obvious from their conversation. I came out of there depressed by the way in which they talked about their profession, their colleagues, the students they taught, their principal, the government. It came out of their anger and their frustration. I understand where it came from, but the public face they were giving to their world was counter-productive. People sitting close by had children in their schools. I am sure that listening to the conversations, they would have started to wonder about what was going on in local education … and perhaps about what the alternatives might be for their children.

This kind of thing can fuel anxiety among members of the community – and may spread by word of mouth, to be picked by the media and/or political fraternities.

What are the things we **should** be saying across the fence — the things that will make a difference in the social context, in how people understand what we are about? Well, I think most educators would see it as important to share information about the increasing capacity of schools to achieve successful change. What sorts of thing should we be telling them about that? What have we learned about it?

Well, we used to think that embedding and sustaining change required nothing more than fidelity to an innovation – that if you set something up and came back some time later you would see it in place as had been intended. We have shifted our thinking about that, because the public, societal context of education is changing. As a consequence, we need to rethink what we mean by "sustainable change". What we need now is **sustainable capacity** for change.

High-capacity schools are places where the personnel are ready to rethink where they are, re-investigate what they're doing, challenge their perspectives and make adaptations on a continuous and constant level. Increasingly, that is the way they are **having** to work. Only to a limited extent can they put something in place and stay with it for a while, unchanged. Far more, nowadays, they are having to ask themselves from very early on how well a change is working. If it's not, how quickly can they rejig it? And if it is, how can they make it work better?

That continuous process of self-assessment, self-evaluation, self-monitoring and change, is about continual learning.

While we are thinking about the change process, to help us clarify in our own minds what actually happens, perhaps to give us a vocabulary that we might use within and beyond the teaching sphere, it is worthwhile reminding ourselves of the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM), which dates back to the 1980s (Hord et al, 1987). The authors developed a conceptual framework that is still being used to describe, explain and predict possible teacher behaviours throughout the school change process.

Many school leaders use the model, and associated resources that have been refined over time, to help in planning school change by identifying the special needs of staff members involved, provide appropriate assistance and ensure appropriate follow-up.[1] The model has also proved useful with parents and students.

The three principle diagnostic dimensions of CBAM are:

- **Stages of Concern** – seven different reactions that educators experience when they are implementing a new program (see Figure 1, overleaf);

- **Levels of Use** – the behaviours that educators develop as they become more familiar with and more skilled in using an innovation or adopting a change; and

- **Innovation Configurations** – the different ways in which teachers adapt innovations in their own situations.

Writing about this model for National Standards documentation in the USA, Loucks-Horsley particularly emphasised its value for planning and implementing professional development that is appropriate to the needs of those involved.[2]

She noted how people who are considering and experiencing change evolve in the kinds of questions they ask, and in their use of whatever the change is. In general, early questions are more self-oriented.

For example at Level Two, addressing personal concerns, a teacher might be saying something like: *"Oh my goodness! We've just*

Figure 1: CBAM, Typical Expressions of Concern about an Innovation

Stage of Concern	Expression of Concern
0 Awareness	I am not concerned about it.
1 Informational	I would like to know more about it.
2 Personal	How will using it affect me?
3 Management	I seem to be spending all my time getting materials ready.
4 Consequence	How is my use affecting learners? How can I refine it to have more impact?
5 Collaboration	How can I relate what I am doing to what others are doing?
6 Refocusing	I have some ideas about something that would work even better.

Adapted from Louckes-Horsley, S (1996) 'Professional development for science education: A critical and immediate challenge', a chapter edited by R Bybee of the Biological Sciences Curriculum Study in *National Standards and the Science Curriculum*, Kendall-Hunt Publishing, Iowa (1996)

been named a Reading Recovery school and I'm designated as the Reading Recovery trainer. How can I get out of this? What can I tell my principal? What can I change? Maybe I can transfer. No, this is going to disrupt my whole life; I don't want to do this." But that's Level Two.

Levels Three and Four are management and consequence concerns. They are things like *"What do I do first? What do I do next? What are the resources I need? Where do I find them? How do I make this work? And what impact is it starting to have?"* At this stage, it's about becoming familiar with the innovation.

By Level Five it's more about saying, *"I'm comfortable with this now. I can do this just fine, I can look at incorporating what others are doing, and I can see ways to adapt it so that it will be better for my kids."*

What has been discovered in practice – which the model developers didn't expect, but which makes sense when you think about it – is that often there is a "two-five split". People tend to jump from *"I don't know anything about this and I don't want to do this"* to *"Wait a minute, I'm doing some stuff that's kind of like that already."* We need to be aware of this, because it can impact negatively on achievement of the desired change.

In effect, what a teacher is saying after a two-five split, is:

"Instead of doing all the learning that I have to, in order to do Levels Three and Four, I have just gone right to adapting. I can call what I'm already doing what they want. I won't have to learn anything new. I won't have to go through the business, the discomfort, the disruption, that learning these new things is going to create."

We see this all the time. We need to guard against it. Small group learning is a great example. If I asked a group of teachers at a staff meeting, *"How many of you use small group co-operative learning?"*, most would raise their hands.

But what if I asked: *"Do you use a particular model – perhaps Johnson and Johnson, or Slavin? How do you deal with assigning roles to the people in the group? What do you do about assessment when you are interested in both individual and group outcomes?"*

The response to me at this point would likely be something like: *"What are you talking about? We put our kids in groups."* They have transformed small group co-operative learning into something that they do already.

Small group co-operative learning has a history, a philosophy, a theory, a whole set of principles behind it. Yet, in the hundreds of classrooms that I have visited, I have rarely seen it in operation as it was intended.

Small group co-operative learning has a history, a philosophy, a theory, a whole set of principles behind it. Yet, in the hundreds of classrooms that I have visited, I have rarely seen it in operation as it was intended. That is not to say that groups are not being used. Nowadays I rarely see a classroom without children working in groups. The question is, what are they doing in the groups?

Are they sitting in groups and doing the same old thing? What actually happens? Do I teach a lesson, then they sit in their groups and complete the worksheets and then, if they've got time left over, they start on tomorrow's homework? If that's the pattern, does that change anything, even if they have a little chance for discussion while they're doing the worksheets? I think not. We can do better than that.

As educators, if we are to do things better, we need to think about whether we understand what this requires of us in terms of new learning. As an individual, do I understand what the new approach/direction/change is really about? Am I motivated enough to be prepared to take it on, so that I can develop the skills, knowledge and new ways of working that will be required. That requires a huge shift in thinking.

In England, Prime Minister Blair talks about developing the "can do" culture. In the English system, they want to work quite explicitly toward a culture where teachers are the models for the young. They see it routinely as teachers taking on what are sometimes difficult changes for them. Of course we can do this. As educational leaders this is a challenge we need to take on.

FINAL COMMENTS

Local leadership is the key to achieving the kinds of change that I have addressed in this paper. And it's not just about the formal leaders, but also the broad base of leadership among many people in schools. It's about leadership that develops an increased capacity for change. It's about leadership that finds ways of bringing the community into our world. It's about reaching out to people who want to support education in principle, to help them understand what it is we're trying to change – and how we're trying to change it, why we're doing it and what it will look like – and to let them become key players.

I'll finish with an anecdote to illustrate the importance of community involvement. I have had the real pleasure and privilege of following a particular teacher for almost twelve years in his classroom. A very talented mathematics teacher, he has just retired from teaching all subjects to a Year 8 group of 13 year-olds.

When I started visiting his classroom, all those years ago, he had just decided to get engaged in student/parent/teacher conferences, which were going to be held at the end of term. This is what happened.

On Day One the teacher and the students looked at all the standards they had to deal with in their program. They talked about what these meant. They looked at samples of student work. They put all kinds of examples up around the wall. There was a lot of discussion about what

the children were working towards, about how the work would be different for different children, and how they would keep records of their learning. They talked about the artefacts that the students would keep, to show how well they were progressing, and their reflections on those artefacts. These would be kept in portfolios.

The program was implemented, with parent conferences planned for the end of term. Throughout the term, the teacher sent home a newsletter every week. This detailed what was happening that week in every class and what he was emphasising. Sometimes, the children would bring home their work for their parents to work with them. Sometimes the parents were asked to be evaluators – not to grade it, but to comment on it, to add feedback, to give information, to provide direction.

About three weeks before the conferences with the parents, the children did presentations for the whole class, teacher included. These presentations were not framed in terms of an "A" on this, and a "C" on that. They were saying:

"These are the things I'm trying to learn. This is how I've gone about it. This is what I think I've mastered. These are the things I'm still struggling with. Here's how I'm trying to get better at it."

When it came time for the parent/teacher/ student conferences, instead of having them all on one night, the teacher spread them over a few weeks, some during the day, some in the evenings and some on the weekends. They were in groups of four or five children with their parents. The groups were carefully selected to reflect the fact that this was an inner-city, very multicultural school. They represented language groups, so that the children could present their portfolios and their learning to their parents in their home language.

The teacher didn't have to be with groups because he had heard all the practice presentations. He already knew what was going on. At the end of these conferences the parents would come and sit individually with the teacher for a few minutes. Yes, they still got their 30 seconds that we have on these interview nights! But now, in these new sessions, they completed the report card together – the parent, the student and the teacher – in the classroom.

Remember, this example is about an inner-city, multicultural Year 8; not an easy context. In this case, there was one parent who happened to be in hospital and couldn't hear the presentation. So the teacher and the student went to the hospital.

What does this anecdote tell us? Well, among other things, there are many ways to think about how we can engage parents as real players. Those ways don't necessarily violate traditional ways of doing things, like producing report cards and all the other things that administrators tend to expect we will do. But they can expand upon them, enrich them and develop new expectations about what can be done in education by working together.

Embedding and sustaining reforms like this requires the development of infrastructure. This may be at the school, district or state level. It is really hard for anybody to make major change alone. You need professional development that is beyond your personal capacity. You need resources. And above all you need to make and use connections, to identify where the disconnections are, and to make fresh connections that span the gaps.

Developing leadership, sustainable leadership is a huge issue in education and will become even more significant. All over the world, as the "baby boomers" near the ends of their careers, we have large numbers of senior, respected administrators retiring. A lot of us came in on that same wave several decades ago. They were exciting times. What benefitted us was mentoring, support and direction. It is now up to us to ensure that our younger successors develop the confidence and the competence to be able to sustain change in their schools.

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ENDNOTES

[1] Editor's note: The publishers of the CBAM materials mentioned in this paper list a number of associated items, in a "package". This includes:

- A Manual for Assessing Open-Ended Statements
- Measuring Stages of Concern about the Innovation: A Manual for Use of the SoC Questionnaire
- Stages of Concern about Innovation: The Concept, Verification, and Implications
- Measuring Levels of Use of the Innovation: A Manual for Trainers, Interviewers, and Raters
- A Manual for Using Innovation Configurations to Assess Teacher Development Programs
- Measuring Innovation Configurations: Procedures and Applications
- Measuring Change Facilitator Stages of Concern: A Manual for Use of the CFSoC Questionnaire

[2] Loucks-Horsley put it this way:

"These stages have major implications for professional development. First, they point out the importance of attending to where people are and addressing the questions they are asking when they are asking them. Often, we get to the how-to-do-it before addressing self-concerns. We want to focus on student learning before teachers are comfortable with the materials and strategies. The kinds and content of professional development opportunities can be informed by ongoing monitoring of the concerns of teachers.

"Second, this model suggests the importance of paying attention to implementation for several years, because it takes at least three years for early concerns to be resolved and later ones to emerge. We know that teachers need to have their self-concerns addressed before they are ready to attend hands-on workshops. We know that management concerns can last at least a year, especially when teachers are implementing a school-year's-worth of new curricula and also when new approaches to teaching require practice and each topic brings new surprises. We also know that help over time is necessary to work the kinks out and then to reinforce good teaching once use of the new practice smoothes out.

"Finally, with all the demands on teachers, it is often the case that once their practice becomes routine, they never have the time and space to focus on whether and in what ways students are learning. This often requires some organizational priority setting, as well as stimulating interest and concern about specific student learning outcomes. We also know that everyone has concerns – for example, administrators, parents, policy makers, professional developers – and that acknowledging these concerns and addressing them are critical to progress in a reform effort.

"Professional developers who know and use the Concerns Model design experiences for educators that are sensitive to the questions they are asking when they are asking them. Learning experiences evolve over time, take place in different settings, rely on varying degrees of external expertise, and change with participant needs. Learning experiences for different role groups vary in who provides them, what information they share, and how they are asked to engage. For instance, addressing parents' and policy makers' question "How will it affect me?" obviously will look different. The strength of the concerns model is in its reminder to pay attention to individuals and their various needs for information, assistance, and moral support.

"Traditionally, those who provided professional development to teachers were considered to be trainers. Now, their roles have broadened immensely. Like teachers in science classrooms, they have to be facilitators, assessors, resource brokers, mediators of learning, designers, and coaches, in addition to being trainers when appropriate. Practitioners of professional development, often teachers themselves, have a new and wider variety of practices to choose from in meeting the challenging learning needs of educators in today's science reform efforts.

Extract from Louckes-Horsley, S (1996) 'Professional development for science education: A critical and immediate challenge', a chapter edited by R Bybee of the Biological Sciences Curriculum Study in *National Standards and the Science Curriculum*, Kendall-Hunt Publishing, Iowa (1996).

This extract is quoted in a summary of CBAM, which was viewed at www.nas.edu/rise/backg4a.htm on 30 May 2004.

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