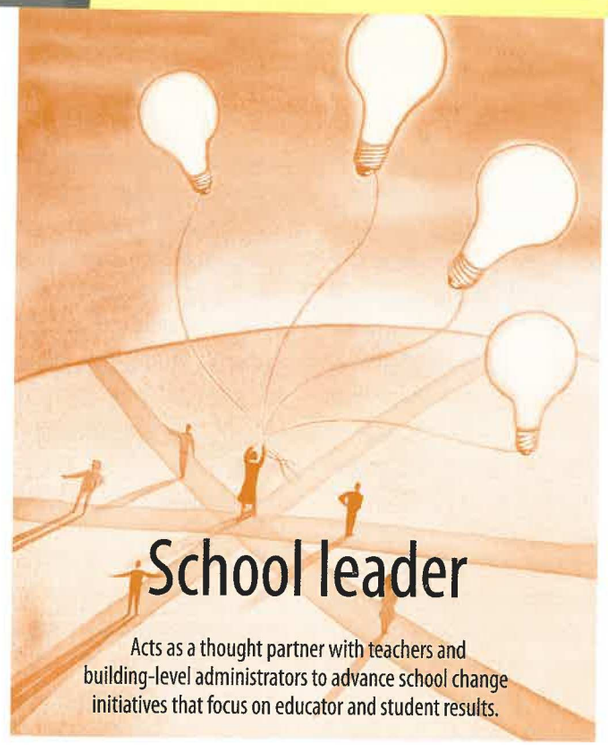

Chapter 10

School leader

Acts as a thought partner with teachers and building-level administrators to advance school change initiatives that focus on educator and student results.

To influence the school in a systemic way, coaches assume a leadership role in the school. With a vision for the school's success and a moral commitment to the success of all students, the coach may serve in a formal or informal leadership role or, occasionally, in both. "Leaders must act with the intention of making a positive difference," asserts Michael Fullan, a leading expert on school change (2001, p. 3). Michael Fullan and Jim Knight assert, "Next to the principal, coaches are the most crucial change agent in a school" (2011, p. 50). They continue,

> [T]he work of coaches is squandered if school principals are not instructional leaders. At the same time, the work of schools will go nowhere unless school districts organize themselves to focus relentlessly on instructional improvement. Without coaching, many comprehensive reform efforts will fall short of real improvement. (p. 50)

School leaders support teachers in several ways

The very premise of the role of a coach is to make a positive difference in a school. As leaders, coaches are committed to building a culture of continuous improvement and helping contribute to the conditions and structures that support it. The Leadership standard addresses the contribution of leadership to effective professional learning.

> **Leadership:** Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students requires skillful leaders who develop capacity, advocate, and create support systems for professional learning (Learning Forward, 2011, p. 23).

The coach commits to the school vision and displays attitudes, behaviors, and commitments

that align with the school vision. Coaches do this by serving on the school improvement team, meeting with other teacher leaders within the school to provide and align services to teachers, leading a variety of school teams, and serving on district committees, such as content-area curriculum committees. As a member of these groups, the coach and other teacher leaders bring the perspective of many classrooms rather than just one's own classroom. Coaches can look at patterns in the implementation of specific initiatives throughout a school and support and assist administrators and teacher leaders in designing and implementing innovations (see Tool 10.1).

Coaches as school leaders also give the principal another set of eyes and help him or her think through the work of significant school change. Coaches can offer the teachers' perspective, consider how initiatives relate or clash, maintain a focus on student learning, and be a critical friend to the principal. The coach is often in the role of coherence making — examining alignment of all that is happening at a site. The coach and other teacher leaders are often considered partners with administrators. And in some instances, these leaders head up initiatives as they work with teachers and one another in leading change.

Among teachers, the coach is a champion for quality teaching and learning and a peer who can influence next-step instructional changes in classrooms. Through informal conversations, the coach guides and supports school and teacher successes, assesses teachers' perceived barriers to change, seeks resisters, and listens to understand the causes of resistance. In some schools, teacher leaders may also assess implementation of new initiatives to ensure practices are in place in all classrooms and support teachers as they try to implement initiatives. In taking this role, the coach often must ensure that the principal and staff acknowledge current student performance (Collins, 2001) and create a plan to move from current reality to desired state. Often, through classroom visits and data conversations, the coach can collect data about current performance in a non-threatening way so that teacher teams are willing to address issues as they move on. The coach is a teacher at heart and a leader of change.

The coach's relationship with the principal is key to the success of the coach as school leader. Les Foltos (2015) notes, "Successful coaches know their effectiveness in collaborating with peers to improve teaching and learning hinges on the support of principals who control the budget and other resources" (p. 49). Principals also deeply influence the culture of collaboration and what Foltos (2015) calls the school's "collective capacity to improve teaching and learning" (p. 49). Building administrators must trust the coach's perceptions and thinking in a variety of areas. In an evaluation of a coaching program, principals noted,

> . . . they could not accomplish all of their work without the support of their coaches and they report having high regard for coaches. They consider the coaches to be their "right-hand person" and make comments such as, "My head would not be above water without my coach"; "They are essential for the implementation of programs"; and "They are the co-instructional leader." [Principals] rely on them for designing and delivering building-level professional development, as well as leading district initiatives. "I don't think we would be where we are without our coaches" was a sentiment expressed by many principals. (Harrison, 2009–2010, p. 5)

Buildings with coaches who are partners with principals in school improvement for student success make greater gains in student learning than buildings without coaches. In a district where they worked, the authors observed that coaching was an effective pipeline for school administration for coaches who chose this career pathway. Coaches become effective administrators because they understood instruction and gained substantial leadership training and experience from their work as coaches.

School leaders need certain knowledge, skills, and practices

Coaches as school leaders understand the change process and how to bring about systemic change. They have tools and the understanding to identify, address, and test theories of change and then devise actions that will take a school from current reality to desired future. Knowing the Stages of Concern, from the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (Hall & Hord, 2015), and using Kotter's (2012) Stages of Change help coaches understand reactions to change and design the necessary interventions to move people and groups forward (see Table 10. 1 on page 102 and Table 10.2 on pages 104–105).

In addition to understanding change, coaches know how to initiate change. Stephen Barkley (2016) notes that conversations can be powerful tools for initiating and motivating change efforts. "I often describe that changes in conversations are the starting point to changes in practice" (para. 7), he states. "Administrators and coaches should be planning for ways they can engage the staff in the conversations that will focus and initiate exploration of the need for change" (para. 7).

Coaches who serve as school leaders use a wide range of tools to assist them. They have tools for facilitating meetings, making decisions, resolving conflict, and reaching consensus. They benefit from using different agenda templates and processes for meeting planning and facilitation. Setting norms with teams that meet regularly or even briefly maintains a productive, comfortable, and safe climate for those participating and builds and deepens relationships among members of long-standing teams (see Tool 10.2). They also use decision-making tools and processes when teams are ready to make decisions regarding actions they will take. Conflict resolution skills are also essential for school leaders because change of any magnitude is likely to involve some conflict. For most, conflict is a frightening experience particularly when it occurs among colleagues or friends. Yet, conflict is a natural part of the change process and using conflict-resolution strategies when there is disagreement keeps the work moving forward, and the relationships productive and healthy. Most of the time conflict is present when change is occurring so the secret is putting the conflict "on the table" so it can be addressed in a productive manner.

Coaches benefit from at least one if not multiple models for planning, designing, and implementing school improvement. They might use the Plan-Act-Assess-Revise cycle or a simpler action plan model for implementing change (see Tool 10.3). Being able to discern between first- and second-order change (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005) is a skill that helps coaches exercise appropriate leadership behaviors to advance any change effort. Implementing first-order change calls for different behaviors than implementing second-order changes. Whether a change is first- or second-order is a situation-specific assessment. To make an accurate assessment, the coach develops a

Table 10.1: Coach Responses to Stages of Concern

Stages		When teachers express these concerns:	Coaches might:
6	**Refocus**	Ready to move on to something else.	Respect and encourage the interest these individuals have for finding a better way.
5	**Collaboration**	Wanting to share with others.	Bring together, from inside and outside the school, those who are interested in working collaboratively.
4	**Consequence**	Seeking to know how it will affect students.	Look at student work.
3	**Management**	Wanting to know how to do it.	Demonstrate exact and practical solutions to the logistical problems that contribute to these concerns.
2	**Personal**	Wondering what it means for me.	Acknowledge and honor the existence and expression of personal concerns.
1	**Information**	Seeking to know more.	Use several ways to share information — verbally, in writing, and through available media.
0	**Awareness**	Lacking interest in the change.	Share enough information to arouse interest, but not so much that it overwhelms.

deep understanding of the school, its culture, its staff, and its history with innovation.

Stages of Concern

The Concerns-based Adoption Model (CBAM) emerges from one of the most extensive bodies of research on change in educational settings. From the research base, educators and others have acquired deep understanding about how to initiate, implement, and support change as well as how to lead change initiatives. One useful tool developed and tested within this body of research is Stages of Concern. The Stages of Concern describe educators' reactions or responses to change and those responses change over time. As Gene Hall and Shirley Hord (2015), two of the developers of CBAM and experts on change in education note, change is a personal experience. As such, those who lead change are aware of and responsive to the needs of individuals as they experience change (Hall & Hord, 2015).

Coaches, therefore, first recognize that individuals have different types of concerns and require different types of supports to address those concerns. There are no prescriptive approaches for responding to concerns expressed; however, the list in Table 10.1 will provide some suggestions regarding how coaches might address the Stages of Concern.

Kotter's 8-Step Change Process

John Kotter (2012) describes a process for leading change that coaches, school administrators, and other leaders can apply. Like the CBAM model, it recognizes that change is a process that occurs over time.

It delineates a series of actions leaders take to establish the reason for the change, from enrolling early advocates to launching the change, through establishing routine practice. The process follows the initiation, implementation, and institutionalization cycle developed by Michael Fullan (1982), the pre-change actions to prepare for the change (Steps 1–4), the during change actions to support implementation (Steps 5–7), and the sustaining change actions to embed the change into the culture of a school (Step 8).

Kotter's eight-step process (see Table 10.2 on pages 104–105) is useful to coaches, principals, and school leadership teams who are leading and facilitating change because it reminds them of the significance of sustained support for any change effort and provides specific guidance on their responsibilities as leaders of change. For coaches who may be less experienced change agents than their principals, the process gives them a roadmap to follow so they can become active partners in the change process. A coach may carefully coordinate any action taken with the primary leader of the change initiative and the leadership team to complement, support, and enhance the change efforts.

Outside the classroom, coaches may find that administrators often depend on them to work with small groups of teachers as well as the entire faculty. To work effectively with groups, coaches draw on various facilitation skills and meeting management tools (e.g. agenda formats, meeting summary formats, decision-making tools) and move initiatives forward. The coach facilitates teachers and administrators as they align strategies and resources with the initiatives and the vision. Often, coaches ask hard questions about why resources are deployed as they are or why the level of implementation is as it is and whose interests are served by current arrangements and configurations (see Tool 10.4).

Coaches as school leaders face challenges

One of the challenges of this role is providing differentiated services or resources to accommodate staff members' various implementation levels related to innovations. Some staff members are ready to delve into new behaviors, while others struggle with understanding the reason for the change and can't move on without a reasonable rationale. When implementing a district-directed change, coaches are challenged with creating schoolwide and individual buy-in to the initiative. It is also hard to support teachers with the necessary time as they implement each initiative. It is often more efficient and powerful to work with groups of teachers in learning teams or work with the teacher leaders as the school implements school wide change.

Another challenge is walking the fine line between being an administrator who monitors the change and being a member of the teaching ranks. Coaches straddle this line artfully so that teachers continue to trust the coaches' influences on their classroom behaviors. Likewise, administrators trust that coaches are committed to moving school and district initiatives forward. Being clear on the line for confidentiality is essential for all to understand and live by. Often the coaches and principals are trained together on new initiatives so that there is time to plan the rollout together. It is important for the coach to understand and support the initiatives at the building level so there is a united front as the coach moves to assist and support teachers. See Chapter 16 Coach Support for discussion of developing the principal-coach relationship.

It is important to go slowly to go fast in the change process. Robert Chadwick (2013), a professional colleague of the authors, teacher, and world-renowned authority on consensus building, frequently says in his presentations, "People never have time to do things right the first time, but they always have time to do things over and over again."

Protecting teachers from unnecessary work or distractions is another challenge to coaches in the role of school leader. In most schools, numerous interruptions, emerging

Table 10.2: Kotter's 8-Step Change Process With Examples of Coaches' Contributions

This table summarizes Kotter's eight-step change process and specifies what actions coaches might take at each step.		
Step 1	**Establishing a sense of urgency**	• Explain the need for immediate change. • Give examples of what has occurred in other schools when the change did and did not happen. • Encourage and listen to colleagues share their ideas about how to make the change. • Make people's ideas public. • Tap into research, evidence, and outside experts to describe the need for change.
Step 2	**Creating the guiding coalition**	• Offer to serve on the leadership team for the change. • Contribute to the leadership team expertise in change management, facilitation, tapping resources, using effective communication, positive attitude, etc. • Encourage those in authority to include people with diverse perspectives on the leadership team. • Model effective listening, dialogue, and facilitation skills in leadership team meetings.
Step 3	**Developing a vision and strategy**	• Contribute to discussion about the most important and compelling reasons for change. • Contribute to developing a vision for the future of the change. • Facilitate opportunities for feedback on the vision or seek input from various stakeholder groups. • Contribute to the action plan to implement the change. • Understand the coach's role in the change implementation.
Step 4	**Communicating the change vision**	• Share the vision with others. • Use the vision in all conversations with appropriate audiences. • Provide safe spaces with no blame for people to share their concerns and anxieties. • Lead by example.

Step 5	**Empowering employees for broad-based action**	• Contribute to developing short- and long-term goals to guide coordinated actions. • Understand, support, and/or coach others in assuming their roles and responsibilities in the change. • Advocate alignment of roles, responsibilities, structures, policies, job descriptions, performance expectations, recognition, relationships, etc. with the change. • Serve as a mediator, collaborator, or consultant to those struggling with the change, as appropriate. • Seek to understand perceived or real barriers to change and contribute to ways to overcome them. • Expect resistance. • Apply tools for encouraging collaborative problem solving, joint work, and peer-to-peer support.
Step 6	**Generating short-term wins**	• Contribute to the development of indicators of success and measures of progress and impact. • Contribute to the data gathering to measure progress and impact and to the analysis, interpretation, and use of the data to improve processes and results. • Recognize and celebrate small changes that are evidence of progress and results. • Recognize and support those who step up as leaders and advocates of the change.
Step 7	**Consolidating gains and producing more change**	• Encourage after-action, data-informed analyses to understand what worked, what isn't working, and what improvements to make. • Contribute to the revision of short- and long-term goals to build on the momentum and accomplishments. • Emphasize continuous improvement to help colleagues get better each day. • Foster others to take leadership roles in different aspects of the change process.
Step 8	**Anchoring new approaches in the culture**	• Facilitate opportunities for people to share publicly their success stories and challenges to inform and encourage lateral learning and support. • Contribute to the necessary professional learning for newly hired staff so they are both supportive of and successful with the changes. • Continue to recognize the leaders and advocates of the change including those on the leadership team, early adopters, those with visible results, and those making concerted effort to adopt the change. • Continue to serve on the leadership team as appropriate and encourage others to join the team to distribute ownership and expand responsibility for leading the change.

SNAPSHOT

A coach as a school leader

Dakota Pateen is a coach at a Marshall High School,* an urban school with many students designated as high poverty. The school has a history of making little growth in student learning for the last 10 years. The teaching staff includes a large percent of veterans who are not sure that change is necessary even though more than 30% of the students would not graduate on time.

As a coach Pateen knows the importance of positively influencing school change. During this last year the administration team, of which he is a member, began talking about ways to reconfigure the work of the school improvement team so that it focuses on building the capacity of the school's teacher leaders to increase their ownership, responsibility, and accountability for the design and implementation of school initiatives. In the spring, the administrators recruited and identified new teacher leaders to serve as members of the revamped school leadership team. Because Pateen knows how important it is that all perspectives from the staff are represented so that the team is viewed as more than merely an agent of the administration, he recommended that two staff members who are frequently identified as naysayers be recruited into the team.

The overarching purpose of the first team meeting in the new school year is to create a sense of team and define the team's purpose. Pateen facilitates a norm-setting process to ensure the team is both collaborative and productive. The team also builds a set of beliefs about team members' roles as teacher leaders. The team explores and clarifies that its purpose as a leadership team is to make real decisions about school improvement efforts across the school. The team writes a purpose statement that includes explicit accountability and responsibility for advancing the school's goal to increase student success and increase graduation rate and basing all decisions on thorough data analysis. One task they agree to undertake is upgrading their PLCs to focus more or teacher learning and student success. The school began PLCs the previous year, yet found that teams were less effective than desired. The team agrees to read a report by Learning Sciences International on the impact of PLCs on student achievement and teacher morale to prepare for their first daylong meeting during which they will examine their current practice and plan a course of action to strengthen the effects of their collaborative work, including engaging reluctant teachers. Team members agree that during the next meeting, each member will report on monthly progress of one PLC and problem-solve implementation challenges as they occur. Pateen compiles the monthly progress checks for the school improvement team to review.

The team also agrees to lead another major initiative to change grading practices. Pateen helps the school improvement team plan to engage more teachers to begin the process of examining research, practices, and alternatives for grading. Pateen outlines a plan for the initial discussion. He wants the team to surface the complex issues associated with changing a school's grading system, including inequities and inconsistencies across classrooms as well as the bottom line of what a grade represents. Discussions about a revised grading system continue for months as people express resistance to the change. Although he experiences some frustration with the slow pace, the conversation gives Pateen an opportunity to learn patience with the change process.

In January, Pateen leads the school improvement team in taking a pulse of its purpose and progress regarding the two major initiatives. He is particularly interested in assessing whether the team feels greater ownership, responsibility, and accountability for the school reforms and whether other staff members turn to them for direction and support in implementing changes. The team is on pace to finalize a new grading policy that they will implement by spring of the next school year. Data from PLCs reveal they are more focused on student learning. At the end of the meeting, members share in a once-around session; their comments reveal that they feel empowered and excited about the school improvement efforts. To continue their work together, the team decides to meet for several full days during the school year and monthly after school for an hour. In these meetings they will continue refining their strategies for schoolwide improvement efforts.

**Fictitious name and school*

problems, or new demands can easily sidetrack teachers' focus and energy. The coach must be a strong advocate for keeping the focus on student learning and the identified initiatives within the school's improvement plan. The coach must be willing to identify the real implementation issues and assist administrators. Often the coach helps the principal set priorities among the many initiatives they are trying to implement. It is important to avoid *initiative fatigue* (Reeves, 2010), which happens when school staffs become so overwhelmed by initiatives that they can no longer take action on anything (see Tool 10.5).

Another challenge for coaches as school leaders is integrating and aligning innovations, especially when most schools are implementing multiple, parallel innovations to help students learn. Coaches interact with building-level administrators and teachers to build connections among the school's different innovations, demonstrate the unique contribution each makes to teaching quality and student learning, and develop clarity about the expectations associated with each. Coaches may find it helpful to create a visual representation to depict connections. Michael Fullan and Joanne Quinn (2016) describe this process as "coherence making" and include it as one capability that successful school leaders need.

Conclusion

Coaches as school leaders facilitate change. Sometimes this role melds with the role of catalyst for change. The key distinction between the two is that a school leader *facilitates* a specific change initiative while a catalyst for change *inquires* about the need for change.

For the coach in the role of a school leader, facilitation skills such as establishing norms, implementing decision-making and problem-solving protocols, handling disagreements, and keeping an eye on the purpose and goal are tools of the trade. The coach leads, but often from behind the scenes. Almost invisible in the change process, he lets those who are doing the work take credit for the success.

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Tools index for Chapter 10

Tool	Title	Purpose
10.1	**A systemic approach to elevating teacher leadership**	Use this paper to provide guidance for developing and supporting teacher leaders at a site level.
10.2	**Stages of team development**	Use this set of resources to understand and assess the current stage of development of various teams at the site.
10.3	**Working agreements for teams**	Use this tool to provide examples of different types of working agreements for grade-level and department teams and to develop agreements for the team.
10.4	**Safe and equitable classrooms for deep learning**	Use this assessment tool and process to assess current state of safe and equitable classrooms at a building and develop an action plan for next steps.
10.5	**Purpose statement and roles and responsibilities for school leadership teams**	Use this process to develop a compelling, clear purpose statement for the school leadership team (or any other team at the school) to guide its work and to identify participants' roles and responsibilities.