CHAPTER 2

GIVING INITIATION THE ATTENTION IT DESERVES

Remind people of the *what*, *why*, and *how* of the change in order to build trust in the purpose and appreciate any early resistance.

KEY PRACTICE

Take the Time to Start the Right Way

Several times in my career and in various parts of the country, I have been involved with summer professional learning for principals and district leaders. I lose count when I remember all of the times that the superintendent took that opportunity to announce, "Here are our major initiatives for this year." As she details those major initiatives for *this year*, I watch her audi-

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ence. Her remarks are almost always met with polite responses and even some visible excitement, but I can imagine that their conversations in their heads (some I can't print here!) include "What will this be?" or "What will it look like?" or "More changes?" or "Are you kidding me?" I'm not necessarily saying that the superintendent was wrong in wanting some changes; rather, I'm suggesting that she is sending a dangerous operational message. I am always afraid that her announcement of "this year's priorities" imply that these major initiatives will be easily launched, incorporated, and managed within a short time frame. This notion is simply wrong.

Successful change and deep improvement rarely happen within a year's worth of work. By her using the phrase "for this year," she is implying just that. The typical summer training announcements are supposed to magically begin the changes, and yet they reinforce my long-standing worry that we do not do ourselves any service when we simply announce a change and then somehow expect it to magically take off and work efficiently after one, two, or three days of training. Effective leaders know that starting the change takes time. Successful initiation moves people forward into the change from carefully choreographed plans and sensitive responses to a wide variety of issues. As effective leaders consider big changes in their schools, they will give initiation as much consideration as they do the actual work of implementation. This chapter will focus on the effective initiation of any change when the intent is institutionalized improvement, a powerful collaborative culture, and enhanced student and teacher performance.

You will remember that the initiation of the change is the "process that leads up to and includes a decision to adopt or proceed with the change" (Fullan, 2007, p. 69). From my experience, a successful start to a change may take several weeks to several months. The driving force behind the change may come from a variety of reasonable sources. It may come from the state or provincial agency, from the district office, as a single decision by a school leader, or it may occur after a collaborative period of study, data analysis, and contemplation.

Provide Timely Information and Be Sensitive to Feelings

Whatever the force behind the change, you can be assured that people will be talking about it even before they start the change. As soon as they hear about the change, much of their discussion may focus on the need to acquire as much information about the change as they can (Hall & Hord, 2001). They may also be interpreting their perceptions of the change within their own individual contexts. By that, I mean that they may be examining the change or their perception of the change in terms of how much or how little the change will affect them (Hall & Hord, 2001). Fullan (2007) reminds us that during

the initiation of the change, it may not matter who or what initiated the change as much as how teachers feel about their perceived understanding of the change and how it will change their personal lives.

During the start of the change, then, the leader must build a variety of ways that the people affected by the change will learn more about it. A fundamental beginning understanding of the change will be vital if the leaders are needing people to begin to form a common language about the change and generally get on board. Often, training is the vehicle to deliver information about the change, and it is generally an effective design for valuable beginning understanding of the change. Our superintendent in this chapter felt that training was perfect to kick off the initiatives; and in part, she was right. Training is an effective and often efficient way to disseminate information about the change because it can be replicated for a variety of audiences and we can control the trainer, thus ensuring some degree of expertise in the presentation.

We also have to be aware of training's limitations. Good leaders provide training when the conditions are just right for people to be motivated to gain some new understanding of the coming change. Training during the summer is often the wrong time for this. Right before school, training is usually met with dread, not enthusiasm, because the timing of the training just isn't right. We all know that schools function within a predictable yearly cycle—and right before the summer. I can assure you that teachers are much more concerned about their classrooms, materials, lesson plans, and class lists than acquiring knowledge about a change that will perhaps put another burden on them. In addition to the timing issue, training sheds very little light on the kinds of implementation issues people may have when they get serious about putting the change into practice. In other words, training may be excellent for providing beginning information, but it is an ineffective design to help teachers figure out practical ways to use the innovation. So, the savvy leaders will usually incorporate training into the initiation phase as a way to help people learn about the change in a uniform way but move to other professional learning designs as people begin implementing the change. As we will see throughout the book, professional learning is also needed throughout the implementation of the change, and yet the design for professional learning will change based on how to most effectively help the teachers at that point in the life of the change.

People Will Make Assumptions About the Change

As people are getting more information about the change, they will begin to make assumptions about the implications of the change on them in a personal way (Hall & Hord, 2001). Questions like "How will this affect me?" and "How much time will this take me

to plan to implement this?" and "Am I the only one who is really going to work on this—will others be able to avoid it?" will be common internally considered questions for adults at school. Even the most effective teachers will wonder about how they will be able to adapt this new change into their practice without completely disrupting their daily work rhythms. For some, the change may be viewed as a burden if leaders are not sensitive to this concern and do not find ways to relieve this internal pressure on the folks who are about to be held responsible for the implementation of the new practice.

Leaders often find themselves in a position where they are the recipients of the change, and they themselves are not fully aware of the purpose of the change. This will make it a steep climb to be able to communicate the purpose of the change to teachers at their buildings. And yet, if a change is handed to them, leaders still have to work to find the purpose of the change and be able to articulate that successfully to their teachers. I always say that if the leaders cannot describe the new work succinctly and clearly help people see the moral underpinnings of the work, they shouldn't be asking teachers to do the work. They simply have no business asking hardworking individuals to devote themselves to the difficult work when they, themselves, cannot describe the value of the change.

Appreciate Any Early Resistance

It may seem farfetched that there would be any resistance to the change before the idea has even operationally begun. Yet, sensitive school leaders will be tuned in to early issues and will anticipate the needs people have early on, allowing them to manage the resistance better and stay dedicated to the purpose of the change. During initiation, the needs people have will vary according to the school, the context of the culture, and other competing pressures. In general, these needs may manifest themselves in some degree of resistance if people believe their needs might not be met. Because of this, leaders must appreciate the resistance they hear, because it signals that people are thinking about the change and are trying to sort it out. It also tells leaders what people may be fearing.

Whatever the responses to the initiation of the change, leaders will want to be sensitive to the kinds of needs people have when considering the change. Three needs or "wants" will generally pop up at the beginning of the change:

- People doing the work will want as much information about the change as possible.
- People will want to know how the change will personally affect them.
- People will want to know the larger reason, or purpose, of the change.

It is not hard to see how the absence of any one of these three needs may result in early resistance to the idea of the change. A deeper exploration of each will provide insights as to how to address each and may help leaders anticipate resistance issues.

Provide as Much Information as Possible. If teachers do not get adequate knowledge about the change through professional learning (usually training), they may form early and possibly incorrect opinions about the change, which may deter implementation or lead to ineffective implementation of the change. For instance, a teacher or groups of teachers may not have all of the information they need to begin developing strategies for implementation; because of this, they may implement the change as they see it but with only part of the information they need to eventually do it well. An example will illustrate this.

My wife, a former reading specialist, had a revelation when she was working with a district from home. She had been providing professional learning on the components of a balanced approach to literacy. Months after that training, she visited a series of classrooms and discovered that, because of partial understanding of the balanced literacy components, some teachers had equated a "balanced approach to literacy" with "pulling guided reading groups each day." That idea is not in itself incorrect; and yet, when she saw these guided reading groups, she came to realize that all of the groups in each visited teacher's class were virtually doing the same work in the same way.

Clearly, the teachers were implementing the change as best as they could with the knowledge they had. While their actions were not intended to be overtly resistant, the lack of understanding could lead to even-

tual sustained resistance because the results of their superficial efforts to learn about it and implement it would not be self-affirming and would not lead to the kind of achievement they wanted. Insufficient understandings of any change might lead to an early disregarding of the entire change because "it doesn't work for me or my kids."

Help People Understand How the Change Will Personally Affect Them. Leaders will also notice that a teacher needs to know how this change will affect them. Hall and Hord (2001) describe this need as a "self" need or egocentric approach to the change. Their personal concerns, while they may not seem that urgent or consequential to the leader, are real for the change implementer. If people are having these kinds of concerns, they are "uncertain about the demands of the innovation, his or her inadequacy to meet those demands, and his or her role with the innovation. This includes analysis of his or her role in relation to the reward structure of the organization, decision-making, and consideration of potential conflicts with existing structures or personal commitment" (Hall & Hord, 2001, p. 63).

As the teacher wonders how this change may affect them, he attaches personal feelings to the change (Hall & Hord, 2001). As he learns more about the change and begins to understand the rationale for the change, inevitably, he may grow curious or even suspicious of his role in the change and how the change will alter his sense of current safety. Feelings about the anticipated change will emerge. In other words, the challenge of initiation is in the space that lies "above and below our necks" (Kegan & Lehey, 2009). Because a potential immunity to change "expresses the thinking and feeling dimensions of a given level of mental complexity," both intellectual and emotional dimensions must be addressed to achieve real, adaptive change and decrease the possibility of resistance (Kegan & Lehey, 2009, p. 214). In essence, then, the leader's duty is to make sure that during the initial phase of the change, a clarification of the change itself and rationale for it (thinking about it) is vital. Equally important is knowing how people are personally reacting or responding to the change (feeling about it) must be part of the leader's overall overt strategy.

Invite Them Into the Rationale, or Purpose, of the Change. As people are learning about the change and wondering how it will personally affect them, they will naturally and inevitably want to know the *why* for the change. The why, or purpose, is uniquely important at the beginning of the work, and we will see that it is equally important as the work is progressing. At first, people will want to know how this

new change is connected to the other work they are doing. In the absence of a clear purpose, there is a danger that people will look at the change as "another thing we have to do," not seeing the connection between the change and other mandates as well as feeling that there is a general "piling on" of initiatives that they are supposed to address—and address well. As I have said earlier, our responsibility as leaders is to (a) know how the change is connected to the other work and (b) know the larger reason, or the purpose, of the change. The larger reason, or purpose, of the change is *not* to raise student achievement test scores. While that may be an outcome of the focused change, it will not be a compelling reason for the change at the schools.

The compelling reason for the change is bigger than raising test scores. The reason or purpose speaks to the idea of what the people inside the school's walls are trying to achieve. Simon Sinek (2009) explains the importance of the purpose as knowing the *why*: "Knowing your why is not the only way to be successful, but it is the only way to maintain a lasting success and have a greater blend of innovation and flexibility. When a why grows fuzzy, it becomes much more difficult to maintain the growth, loyalty, and inspiration that helped drive the original success. By difficult, I mean that manipulation rather than inspiration fast becomes the strategy of choice to motivate behavior. This is effective in the short-term but comes at a high cost in the long term" (p. 50).

"Why are we doing this?" is a challenging and legitimate question for leaders. As we start the changes, we must know that people want to make sense of the change and will be motivated by that sense of the *why*. Pink (2009) puts it like this: "The most deeply motivated people—not to mention those who are most productive and satisfied—[want to] hitch their desires to a cause larger than themselves" (p. 131). The *why*, then, is the purpose for the work; and during the early phase of the work, it is one of the devices that teachers use to not only make sense of the change but also understand the "moral" ramifications of the work. If addressing the feelings people may have about starting the change is important, equally important is the need teachers will have about the *why* of the change. As we have said before, in the absence of a clear purpose, there is a danger that people will look at the change as "another thing we have to do," not seeing the connection between the new change and the other mandates.

Sometimes as leaders, we think that teachers should just understand that we wouldn't ask them to do something unless it was important. Or, we feel that people just need to get on with their business and "do the right thing and accept the change because *we* told them to do it."

I can't tell you how many school leaders have told me in trainings that "all this talk about purpose is worthless. We just need to document teachers if they will not get on board." This idea of simply putting more pressure on teachers to "get on board" usually has the opposite of the effect we want (Zuckoff & Gorscak, 2015). Folks will sometimes just wait out changes when they feel pressured and are not given the chance to embrace the purpose. Resistance to the change, then, will claim early footing before much of an effort has happened to implement it.

Leadership Essential Actions During Initiation

One of our case study districts enjoyed a relatively smooth initiation of their change, while the other appeared to have made some missteps in assuming that smooth implementation would naturally follow a brief initiation. Remember that initiation is a change phase dedicated to the *preparation* of people to be successful with the change. It is "the process that leads up to and includes a decision to adopt or proceed with the [implementation] of the change" (Fullan, 2007, p. 69). That anticipatory process requires planning, actions, and attention to people if it is to go smoothly. Those planning and responding actions are embedded in our "change architecture," explained in chapter 1. Embedded in that architecture as unifying threads are five essential actions that should be in the leaders' repertoire when the change is initiated. While these five essential actions pertain to initiation in this chapter, the same five actions will also be vital during implementation and institutionalization. For each phase in the life of the change, the five actions will vary in goal, scope, and action. For now, we will explore these five essential actions within the context of initiation and the reduction of early, organized resistance to the change. Remember that the goal of initiation is to provide a smooth pathway from "learning about the change" to "beginning to do it." After our review of these essential initiation actions, we will see how both of our districts applied them to their particular contexts.

Action #1: Collaboratively Construct the Purpose/ Vision and Strategically Message It

Daniel Pink (2009) identifies purpose as one of the three most important motivators for people. During initiation of a major school improvement change, people will question the rationale for it. That simple question is an attempt by a teacher or teachers to "put it all together" in their minds and see the importance of this particular change at this particular time. Schools function like both complex educational and

social organizations; gone are the days when leaders could just command a change and people would fall in line simply because of the leader's charisma or authority. In today's world, the authoritarian or command style of leading will probably lead to being ignored or pretending to cooperate while quietly undermining the effort (Kotter, 2012). We have seen that this pressure to change may communicate a negative message: "There is something wrong with you. You're no good the way you are" (Zuckoff & Gorscak, 2015, p. 37). Therefore, having a cause that is grounded in an overall, passionate purpose during early initiation is essential not only to galvanize people but also to reduce the opportunities for resistance.

In most cases, the purpose of the work is articulated in the vision for their school. The vision for the school should describe "what we intend to become" when the major change initiatives have been successful. Leaders are often charged with completing or revising the vision for their schools. They, however, must avoid the trap of feeling the pressure for a clear vision and developing it themselves without the varied voices of the teachers who work within the school's walls. The development of the school's vision, involving as many people as possible, will be the most important action in identifying the purpose.

You can imagine, then, that the vision for the school drives the work. The vision also becomes both a filter and an aligning tool for the school. If held tightly, the vision will be examined in terms of a new initiative or change; if the new change "fits" with the vision, it might be initiated. If the new change doesn't seem to fit or people cannot see how the new change aligns with the major work already in place, perhaps the new initiative should not be considered.

The vision is an important part of the initiation of major work. That would mean that at the beginning of the important work, in the absence of the school vision, a leader must collaboratively describe the purpose through a thoughtful vision of what the school intends to become. Reeves and Eaker (2019) strongly support the act of creating a shared vision, saying that "during the first one hundred days, leaders must also build a strong foundation of shared values and collective commitments" (p. 77). If you believe that the vision is essential in the initiation of any major change—but a vision for the school already exists and has for several years—then the work during initiation would be to show how the new change would support the existing shared values already established. The leader's job, in this case, is to show how the new change will *accelerate and enhance* the quality of the vision as well as show how the new work aligns with the work people are already doing.

While I do not agree that the casting or recasting of a vision must be in the first 100 days of the leader's tenure at that school (Reeves & Eaker, 2019), I do believe that one of the leader's roles is to determine the alignment of the new suggested change with the other initiatives in place, collaboratively develop a new vision that describes our purpose in our future statement, and communicate clearly and often the vision on a daily basis. This constant reminding of the alignment of the work and how the new change will enhance the work is not only useful but also urgent as people are learning about the change and wondering whether or not this new change will matter.

Constructing and Messaging the Purpose During Initiation

Why Is This Action Important?	What If It Doesn't Happen?
Establishes the change as a high priority	People may re-prioritize the change in the absence of clarity from the principal.
Develops a way to help people "picture" the change in action	People may bring their own connotations to the change and misjudge the intent of the change.
Keeps reminding teachers the *why* for the change as they begin preparing to implement the change	If the vision and purpose are only stressed at the very beginning of the change, when people begin to think about implementing it, the vision/purpose may have become "fuzzy" due to lack of regular conversation.
Boosts energy and reminds people of the *why*	People may become less motivated and less unified in what they are intending to achieve.

Action #2: Listen and Be Empathetic to Early Concerns

During initiation, it is important to offer an empathetic ear to the people who will be eventually doing the implementation work. The leader's goal is to demonstrate acceptance of the feelings people are having and encourage them to remember that they and their work are worthwhile (Zuckoff & Gorscak, 2015). Listening to teachers will provide the mechanism for encouragement and empathy as they sort out their feelings and need for information. Listening *about* the change is vastly different from listening to see how you can *persuade* people to embrace the change. When I think of convincing people to accept the change, I immediately imagine the act of pushing them toward it. This exertion of pressure may be perceived as just that—pressure—and could convey the false assumption that the leader's words are far more important than the teacher's. The tactic of force does not lead to long-term collaboration, trust, and commitment. Listening *about* the change sends

a different message and is actually one of the leader's key skills during initiation. What we know is this: when the teacher feels accepted and heard, there is less need to focus her mental and emotional energy on protecting herself (Zuckoff & Goscak, 2015).

These initial teacher reflections may take the form of concerns or worries about this future alteration in their daily practice. Hall and Hord describe the central idea of concerns people have during any time in the change and the key role leaders can play in meeting these concerns head on. They describe the research that finds that the more successful schools are places where the leader is having "very small, almost unnoticed interventions called incidents" (Hall & Hord, 2001, p. 67). These interventions, however, look nothing like traditional interventions. In Hall and Hord's actions, leaders are choosing to have these short conversations with teachers in an attempt to hear the concerns those teachers may have and to demonstrate understanding without altering the school's purpose and vision.

In fact, the leader, especially during the early initiation, should not assume that he or she completely understands the teacher's point of view; instead, his role is to listen, ask questions, and lightly probe to get to the source of the concern that the teacher has with the change (Hall & Hord, 2001). While these concerns may lie a wide range of worries, during the early part of the change many worries will, as we have already learned, center on the need for information about the change, the rationale for the change, and how it will personally affect them.

If these small, incidental conversations are considered to be interventions (Hall & Hord, 2001), then the question becomes "what do I do about it as the leader of this change?" It may surprise you to know that more often than not, just the act of listening provides the assurance, trust, and a platform for personal or information issues. That trusting platform may be enough to suspend long-lasting resistance to the change. I have used these short listening episodes on many occasions (usually lasting no more than three minutes!) and have found that sometimes, if I solve the concern for them, people will take my solution as another way I am demeaning their intelligence or action regarding the change. You may feel that would never happen to you; however, I must caution you against the act of jumping too quickly to a solution. Remember that during the early stages of initiation, people want to still be affirmed for who they are and their efforts long before the change began. One goal of effective initiation is to prepare people for an open embrace of the change. Listening may be the most powerful way to send the message that teachers are partners with us in the change process and that their feelings are valid and must be heard.

The tactic of force does not lead to long-term collaboration, trust, and commitment.

Listening to Early Concerns People Have

Why Is This Action Important?	What If It Doesn't Happen?
Helps form an empathetic partnership between you and teachers	People may feel that they can't talk about their worries with leaders.
Reinforces the efforts people are making to embrace the change	People may feel that their efforts are "not good enough" and harshly judge their own competence.
Gives leaders insights as to what the problems might be or what people need at this time	Leaders might make mistakes in assuming they understand how to support people.
Models the kind of behavior we are expecting to see schoolwide	Teachers may unfairly judge leaders as not demonstrating the kind of empathetic behavior they expect teachers to use in their classrooms.

Action #3: Provide Pathways for People to Acquire What They Need to Be Good at It

A pressing need early on during initiation of the change will be for information about the change—what is it, how does it look, what materials are necessary for the change, how much time will it take, what are the results of other schools that have implemented the change, and so forth. Traditionally, one of the first steps in providing information is to ask teachers to participate in professional learning specifically about the change. The purpose for professional learning is to allow people to grasp new ideas, ask their big questions about the change, and begin to think about how they will integrate the change into their existing practices (Farina & Kotch, 2014).

All teachers who are being asked to not only consider the change but accept and implement it will, hopefully, learn about the change and the research behind it along with pertinent information about the change. We know that this initial professional learning usually takes the form of training. Training remains as usually the most efficient and valuable form of professional learning if the outcomes include (a) information or knowledge about the change, (b) the theory or research behind it, (c) modeling or glimpses of how the change might look in the classroom, and (d) conversations about the skills needed to be successful in the change (Joyce & Showers, 2003). In the initiation phase, therefore, it might be that training is necessary to provide all four of these essential components. One would hope that the training not only supplies these outcomes but also instills an energy or enthusiasm for the purported

change. Training that aligns the outcomes of the sessions with the purpose or vision of the change is destined to be much more successful than training where the participants have to work hard to see the connection.

It has been my experience that if the early initiation training does not adequately supply the four outcomes previously listed, teachers may begin to reflect negatively on the change and suggest that this new set of practices are "simply another thing to do" without relevance to the purpose of the school. The leader's fluidity in designing and providing different forms of professional learning, then, becomes one of her most important skills. I strongly believe that the way professional learning looks and the goals for it should change over the life span of the change. If we can look at professional learning as "a constant and deliberate focus throughout the life span of the initiative, then the design for adult learning will change over time in response to progress and individual needs (Tomlinson & Murphy, 2015, p. 66). In other words, I like to say that training may be your best friend during initiation in order to get the same message out to large numbers of implementing teachers. However, it will be the *last* design teachers want when they are in the midst of implementing the change. When we deeply explore implementation in the next chapter, we will see other professional learning designs that are more likely to be well suited to that stage of actually trying the change practices out in our classrooms.

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Creating Ways for People to Get Good at the Change

Why Is This Action Important?	What If It Doesn't Happen?
Creates a uniform enthusiasm and knowledge base for the change	People may interpret the meaning of the change in different ways.
Provides a variety of ways that people can process their learning about the change	People's individual differences in learning will not be respected.
Prepares teachers for implementation with the research, how it may look, and the skills needed to use it in the classroom	Teachers may feel ill-equipped to think about implementation.

Action #4: Build Their Trust in You, the Work, and Each Other

It probably goes without saying that a deep sense of trust is critical if people are going to initiate and sustain an important change at school. Megan Tschannen-Moran defines trust as "one's willingness to be

vulnerable to another based on the confidence that the other is benevolent, honest, open, reliable, and competent" (Tschannen-Moran, 2004, p. 17). Trust is a big idea that tends to be hard to describe. Trust is dynamic in that it can change over the course of time or over the course of the relationship as interdependence among the people in the school community changes. Sinek (2009) concurs, commenting that "trust is a feeling, not a rational experience. We trust people and companies even when things go wrong, and we don't trust others even though everything might have gone exactly as it should have. A completed checklist does not guarantee trust. Trust begins to emerge when we have a sense that another person or organization is driven by things other than their own self gain" (p. 84).

Sinek (2009) helps us understand the relationship of trust to values. "You have to earn trust by communicating and demonstrating that you share the same values and beliefs. You have to talk about your *why* and prove it with *what* you do" (p. 85). Sinek effectively aligns the importance of trust with two critical needs people will have during the early initiation of the change. In essence, he is saying that as people get started on a major change, they will want to know if their *why* is connected to others in the organization. Similarly, people will want to see the first steps (clarity about the *what*) toward the *why* to be clear and directly associated with it.

If trust is more of a feeling or a perception of the alignment of the *why* and *what*, then what are leader actions to promote trust during the early stages of the change? Fullan (2007) suggests that one skill for leaders is to show empathy with teachers in the difficult or trying circumstances of early change while maintaining the message and keeping clear on the vision. The leader, during initiation, alternately applies pressure (maintaining the message) and support (showing empathy with teachers). This combination actually is quite comforting to teachers because they know what they are trying to achieve and feel that their personal points of view are being considered and heard. Kotter (2012) reminds us that if the change is defined as taking several years and people function in the absence of empathetic pressure, they may indeed delay the start of their work on the initiative, thinking that there isn't an urgency to begin.

To me, the work of initiation is so related to these feelings people may experience early on in the work. Brene Brown (2017) calls the work ahead for anyone involved in deep change "braving the wilderness." She explains that as people are called for greater things, they must both maintain the focus on what is important and have the courage to be individuals and voice their ideas. After compiling interviews of people focusing on the idea of trust, several key actions are critical to her. They include the following (pp. 38–39).

Critical Actions to Help People "Brave the Wilderness" (Brown, 2017)

- Establishing boundaries and asking for clarity around boundaries
- Being reliable to others
- Holding ourselves and others to the standard
- Being benevolent to others
- Behaving according to the community's values
- Withholding judgment
- Creating generosity around actions, ideas, and intentions

I wouldn't call Brown's ideas a checklist but rather a list of considerations, and they have particular significance to the kind of trusting culture that leaders hope to have and develop during the early, stressful work of learning about and considering an important change to schools. In reflecting on her considerations and those of Kotter, Fullan, and Sinek, Brown suggests that the following trust-building actions for leaders fall into place to support early initiation:

- Keep clear on the message and the purpose of the work.

- Provide "gentle" pressure for people to remain focused on the *why* and the *what*.

- Have empathetic conversations with teachers and be open to early concerns they have.

- Communicate clarity about the boundaries of the anticipated change.

- Be tolerant of different points of view, avoiding judgment, while maintaining the focus.

Building Trust Early On

Why Is This Action Important?	What If It Doesn't Happen?
Allows honest conversations about the purpose of the work	People may be initially suspicious of the change.
Encourages open conversations and transparency about the change	People may share their concerns covertly or create dissatisfaction among their peers.
Models a tolerance for varying points of view	People may feel like the change is coupled with an inordinate amount of pressure or a need for conformity.
Creates a professional feeling	Teachers may not feel honored for their hard work and intelligence and begin to distrust the change.

Action #5: Facilitate a Sense of Accomplishment

While teachers may not be actually implementing the change, they will want to visualize where they think they will get started. Often the work of the change will appear overwhelming. This feeling of futility may prevent teachers from making the turn from "learning about it" to "beginning to practice it." Kotter (2012) emphasizes the role of "short-term wins" (p. 126) as critical in reinforcing effort in getting started and providing a clear sense of accomplishment at the very beginning. He believes that short-term wins have three characteristics:

- They are visible and practical.
- They are unambiguous; there can be little argument over their viability.
- They are clearly related to the change effort, although they may appear as small steps.

The implications for leaders, then, are apparent. During early initiation, leaders must engage teachers in their personal deliberations of "where they will get started" on the change so teachers clearly have these short-term goals established. While the effort will be anchored in the long-term purpose, the anticipated teacher actions must feel short term to teachers (Bossidy & Charan, 2009). As each teacher chooses different short-term goals, if those goals are "clearly related to the change effort" (p. 126), they will propel the overall work forward when teachers get started.

Facilitate an Early Sense of Accomplishment

Why Is This Action Important?	What If It Doesn't Happen?
Helps people visualize their first attempts at implementation	People may feel overwhelmed.
Allows people a personalized way to get started	Individual teacher needs are not considered.
Provides the right balance of heat and light	May be viewed as a uniform requirement for the same kind of "getting started" actions, not influenced by individual needs and skills.

Take a Moment

We have taken a deep dive into initiation. It is apparent that initiation of the change is a time that warrants attention. Because of our exploration of this phase and two districts' experiences with it, we are able to reflect on our own practices during this beginning phase:

To what extent do I

- get clear on the purpose of the innovation I want to implement;

- provide a way for teachers to collaboratively help me design a vision which describes the purpose and what we are trying to achieve;

- use the vision to continuously message the purpose before implementation;

- create times for teachers to talk to me about their perception of the change;

- demonstrate understanding of their concerns;

- reinforce the ways I notice their efforts;

- provide well-designed professional learning to give teachers a general understanding of the change;

- reflect on any knowledge gaps that arose during the professional learning and give chances for teachers to individualize their continued learning about the change;

- build trust in how I'm handling the beginning of the change;

- model the kinds of open, trust building behaviors that I want my teachers to demonstrate;

- encourage teachers to begin thinking about "how they will get started" with the change; and

- allow teachers to select their own ways, even if I think they are small or insignificant, to get started?

THE LEADERS OF OUR TWO SCHOOL DISTRICTS INITIATE THE WORK

Kingsport City Schools and the Ashton Unified School District are two distinct examples of varying approaches to the initiation of their changes. After our deep dive into the principles of initiation and its importance to change, it appears to be a good time to look at how each set of leaders handled the initiation of their major change and to understand how their actions related to our five essential actions.

Kingsport City Schools

Kingsport City Schools wanted to "turn the page" and change the version of their instructional coaching program into something more relationship rich and results based. They also wanted to continue to support their principals in deeper instructional ways, seeing the new coaching program as the on-site support for principal understanding of quality teaching and learning. You will remember that in previous years, the former program provided instructional coaches who were assigned to buildings and targeted teachers who were low-performing or considered deficient in curriculum and/or instruction. Brian Cinnamon, assistant director of schools, explains that the former model focused heavily on curriculum knowledge and knowledge of the new state learning standards. Stephanie Potter, former director of professional learning adds, "I'm not even sure how much coaching training they [the former coaches] had, so they may have not been coaching teachers when they thought they were coaching teachers." In the old model, coaches were not seen in a positive light by teachers—in essence, if they showed up at a teacher's door, you knew "you were in trouble."

For all of these reasons, the district wanted a new coaching model that provided the support principals were uniformly requesting and was more welcomed and effective with teachers. So, the district leaders decided that they wanted a more balanced, positive coaching model that simultaneously supported effective curriculum understanding as well as instructional practices. Because the new director of schools saw this as an opportunity to implement a coaching initiative that was more in line with best coaching practices and continue to showcase his district in a positive way, he moved forward with implementing this new coaching program, which was dramatically different from the former one. He was quite specific and strategic in how he saw initiation. He wanted all communication to dispel any resemblance to the old coaching model. He did not mind being very directive in terms of how the program would look and how it would begin. Here are some of his major needs and a few important actions in the approximate order in which they occurred in Kingsport during initiation of instructional coaching:

Clarity of the Vision and Messaging

1. The director felt strongly that in order to initiate a new version of coaching in the district, the new coaches should be called something different. Therefore, he was intentional in terms of the name they were to have. Over a course of several months, he involved a team at the district level who deliberated over the

most important constructs of the new coaching program. As part of that conversation, a new title for the coaches was determined. They were now to be called "instructional design specialists" or InDeS (as they were generally known in Kingsport; pronounced "indies"). All correspondence from that moment on included the new title of the coaches.

2. District personnel were available to visit each school to explain the new version of coaching as instructionally focused and were eager to work with anyone in the school who wanted additional support.

   Purpose of the Change and Clarity of Messaging

3. I was hired to begin long-term consultation with the district and with the newly named InDeS to design, implement, train, and evaluate the new coaching initiative in all 11 schools.

   Need for Knowledge to Alleviate Fears

4. Principals spent time in summer meetings talking about the new version of coaching and how it was to be different from the old version. Early on, they were also updated on what the new coaches were learning and how they were going about their duties.

   Need for Knowledge to Alleviate Fears

5. InDeS were hired to serve each building and were encouraged to establish trust in their buildings by *not* having specific duties at first and building relationships with the wide range of teachers and abilities in their schools.

   Build Trust

6. Principals were asked to create a "contract" with their InDeS in terms of (a) how the InDeS would operate in that school, (b) how they would handle confidential teacher issues and protect teachers from unfair evaluation, and (c) how often the InDeS would meet with the principal. These contracts were disseminated and discussed by each principal at faculty meetings early in the first year of the new instructional coaching initiative.

   Build Trust and Clarity of Messaging

The director's initiation of the instructional coaching change lacked, interestingly, much drama. He had an advantage that other district leaders might not often have. The old connotation of coaching was not popular; teachers resented being "targeted" by the former instructional coaches and some were quite embarrassed to have that forced relationship with their coach. Therefore, the new coaching version seemed more fair, equitable, and transparent to principals, teachers, and the coaches.

The renaming of the coaches seemed like a small action, but the lasting effects of it smoothed the path to implementation. A new name seemed to signal "different and better" to people, and they appeared to embrace it. This contributed to the trust in the new initiative that the director

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desired. In effect, the name change buried the old difficult feelings some people had in the former coaching protocols and replaced it with new energy around the "improved" coaching ideals being touted.

There was a considerable amount of communication and clarity about the new initiative, and the director and his staff chose to communicate the major differences most forcefully. Principals were involved early on in the conversation about new instructional coaching; in fact, they had been some of the most vocal in requesting a change to the old program. The principals had a sense that they were helping to design the new program and there was a sense that ownership among them was at a consistently stable level.

The InDeS made it clear to teachers that their roles, at least at first, were to provide whatever assistance the teachers needed. While some of the InDeS complained that they were being asked to help teachers in ways they worried would have little impact on students, they agreed that these "little actions" were powerful in establishing trust with the teachers at their buildings. These small actions also established a sense of accomplishment for both the InDeS and the teachers—while the InDeS may not have been thrilled about some of the things they were being asked to do by the teachers, both they and the teachers felt that they were "doing things" and getting things done.

We will see in the next chapter on implementation that in spite of their efforts to provide any kind of service the teachers were requesting (at first), InDeS were not uniformly welcomed in all classrooms at their schools. Brian Cinnamon reports that "they struggled with how to go about building relationships at schools and how to shift past just providing resources to teachers and move deeper into the work that would make a difference." The InDeS, indeed, felt that they were held to rather narrow means of starting their work at first. This restricted way of beginning their work was clearly communicated and required by the director.

Initiation of this change in Kingsport City Schools took some work and focus. Successfully launching a new initiative, even when the change is welcomed, is never easy. This director and his team seemed to demonstrate quite a bit of savvy in how they knew instructional coaching in his schools could be reimagined and launched.

The Ashton Unified School District

The decision makers in the Ashton Unified School District had studied years of student performance information and had come to the conclusion that a new reading program and material were needed for grades K–5. This

decision was led by two groups: (a) the district's school board members who were alarmed at the consistently mediocre student performance and (b) the new superintendent and her curriculum and instruction staff. There was a sense of urgency in this decision. There was a marked lack of consistency and integrity in K–5 reading across the elementary schools. Some teachers in various schools were demonstrating a sophisticated understanding of reading curriculum and instructional strategies, while some teachers in other schools were not. In fact, there was a wide range of teacher knowledge and performance even within the same school. District data verified this wide range of performance in terms of student achievement when matched with teacher competency.

With this issue of uniformly raising the "floor" in terms of curriculum knowledge and instructional strategies in all schools, the new program and materials were purchased for the elementary grades. Leaders' thinking was that the materials would be first initiated and implemented in grades K–2, and then initiated and implemented in grades 3–5 the following year. Here are a few important actions in the approximate order in which they occurred during initiation of instructional coaching.

1. The district leaders felt that the reading need was urgent. They may have also felt that the data, since consistently poor for years, proved the urgent need for an overhaul of the current reading curriculum and practices. It was also assumed that this need was widespread among the teachers and the principals of the elementary schools. When the reading change was communicated, there was some resistance from both teachers and elementary principals for a variety of reasons. The initiation, however, proceeded. *[Clarity of Messaging]*

2. It may have been assumed that all knew the purpose of the change; however, no initial work was accomplished with the teachers and principals in terms of the desired change and what it would look like in schools (the vision). *[Purpose of the Change]*

3. Professional learning was held for the K–2 teachers during the summer before implementation, but on a voluntary basis. This took the form of training, led by consultants from the new reading company. In addition, the consultants and a team from the district led training of the instructional coaches on the program. The anticipated outcomes for both coaches and teachers from this training were (a) new knowledge about the "science" of reading, (b) an overview of the various materials the teachers will use, (c) the research behind the practices, and (d) a sense of the pacing *[Need for Knowledge to Alleviate Fears]*

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of the program to accomplish the goals. In addition, a short training session was conducted for principals (on a voluntary basis) by the consultants of the company. After that, a short series of professional learning opportunities was held for principals during their regular meetings (led by district leaders) to continue to give them a sense of the new program and what to look for in classrooms.

Build Trust and Clarity of Messaging

4. Materials were ordered to support the K–2 implementation; however, not all schools opened the school year with a complete set of materials. Inadequate communication between district leaders and school principals led to frustration in terms of beginning implementation.

Clarity of Messaging

5. School instructional coaches were hired to work in all elementary schools to support quality instruction. These coaches were told to specifically target quality reading instruction using the new K–2 reading materials. Many of them did not have a reading background and/or did not attend the reading training. Teachers were not sure what roles the new instructional coaches were serving.

Build Trust and Provide a Sense of Accomplishment

6. Teachers were asked to begin the new year with a preassessment of the K–2 students to provide information for them to more effectively teach the range of students in classrooms. The preassessment was not reviewed by teachers before its implementation; many teachers were alarmed at the level of the preassessment. Students were generally not successful with the preassessment to the extent that many of them were seen crying in classrooms because of their lack of reading knowledge or skill.

The Ashton Unified School District leaders surely had a reading problem on their hands with the previously used set of curricular materials. Years of student performance information verified this need. It seemed logical to district leaders and school board members to call for an overhaul of the program. Both sets of leaders may have overestimated the agreement they felt teachers and principals would have with the decision. Often, teachers will intellectually understand the need for change but subjectively reject it or be fearful of it. These "illogical fears" may rest in teachers' feelings that they will be inadequate to teach the new program or that the district doesn't appreciate their efforts over the years. There

was concern about the new reading program, then, before it was ever fully implemented.

Professional learning to launch the Reach for Reading program was sketchy and inconsistent. According to Debra Olson, a former principal and district leader of the implementation of the program, there were optional sessions for teachers during the spring and summer of 2016. Interestingly, instructional coaches were also being brought to the district the same school year; these coaches were given more extensive training on the reading program. The coaches, then, redelivered this training in a shortened form at the first required in-service day for teachers during the early fall of that year. The quality of this required teacher training hinged on the knowledge and pedagogy ability of the instructional coach. "Coaches at this point were really just one step ahead of teachers in terms of reading pedagogy," explains Joanie Kemper, senior director of teaching and learning. For this reason, the training varied in terms of content and quality. "They (the teachers) got one full day of training for the program. One-half of that day was to see the materials; the other half was to work in collaboration with their fellow teachers to work through the materials and plan together," explains Joanie Kemper. "This was the only training they got during their one day of required in-service that year."

Principals received opportunities to learn about Reach for Reading at first, but those opportunities were on a voluntary basis during that same spring of 2016. "I remember the one I went to when I was still a principal," recalls Debra Olson. "The training wasn't that good—it was not going to hit the mark and I knew already what worked in reading so I didn't pay it much attention." The district did conduct a series of short training sessions in monthly elementary principals' meetings as the first year of implementation proceeded. The superintendent, however, attended some of those principal meetings and became alarmed at the way program initiation and beginning implementation were proceeding; that was the time that Debra Olson (then a principal) was asked to take on dual roles—that of building principal and advisor to the district for the implementation of the program. At this point and until the present, she worked with both principals and instructional coaches to help make them "experts on the science of reading."

Also contributing to the concerns about the program was the student preassessment that teachers were to give the K–2 students during the first fall of the program. Many of the teachers in the Ashton Unified School District are members of their local NEA unit. Diane Connelly, a local union staff member, recalls that "our members began calling our office.

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They had been told to give this lengthy preassessment that was part of the new series and when they did, kids began crying. So, a lot of the teachers began calling our office saying that the whole reading change was horrible." To make matters worse, a steering committee to guide the implementation of the K–2 program had already warned district officials not to give the preassessment as it would alarm teachers and make them feel inadequate. Yet, district officials decided to proceed with the assessment. When the word got out that there had been a warning about the preassessment from a committee made up of teachers and yet the district plowed on, there was an immediate negative judgment, at least from a significant number of teachers. These teachers communicated their feelings that no one was understanding their particular issues and how instruction was working in their classrooms.

In Ashton Unified, during this early initiation, there was a feeling that "here we go again" with a new initiative. Because of the lack of a vision (purpose) and communication was either spotty or inconsistent, teachers, coaches, and principals were left to make up their own versions of what the change was and how it would proceed. Was Ashton Unified in trouble at the very start? Yes. Would it be able to recover? We will look at their specific actions to "right their wrongs" in the next chapter and see how the Ashton Unified leaders coped with the issues.

Take a Moment

Both sets of district leaders could justify the changes they initiated, and yet there was varied success between the two districts in how teachers and principals perceived the changes. These two districts provide us great examples of attempts at starting something big. As you think about their experiences, ask yourself the following:

How did the district leaders

- clearly communicate the purpose of the changes;

- invite stakeholders to collaborate with them to design a vision which describes the purpose and what they were trying to achieve;

- create times for teachers to talk to them about their perceptions of the changes that were to come;

- demonstrate understanding of their concerns;

- provide well-designed professional learning to give teachers a general understanding of the change;

- reflect on any knowledge gaps that arose during the professional learning and give chances for teachers to individualize their continued learning about the change;

- build trust about the change and how they were handling it;

- allow time for teachers to begin thinking about "how they will get started" with the change; and

- allow teachers to select their own ways, even if I think they are small or insignificant, to get started?