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Changing School Culture to Engage Disengaged Students

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Organizational Improvement Plan

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Abstract

This Organizational Improvement Plan (OIP) examines how formal leaders (including principals and vice principals) and informal school leaders (such as influential teachers) can provide opportunities for greater engagement in the learning process for all students by changing the culture (Schein, 2010) of an increasingly diverse Alberta school. Educational leaders beliefs and assumptions about the purpose of education and the roles of teachers and students will impact their beliefs about student engagement (Vibert & Shields, 2003) in both teacher-led curricular and extracurricular activities. Several recent surveys, including surveys in Alberta schools (Learning Bar, 2016) and larger surveys in the United States (Gallup, 2014), demonstrate that only 50% to 55% of students in Grades 5 to 9 are engaged with school.

The strategies provided in this OIP guide leaders through the change process using a modified version of Cawsey, Deszca and Ingols' (2016) change path model. The solution to increasing student engagement seems to rest in adopting strategies influenced by liberal thought (Raven, 2005) and critical theory (Freire, 1971, 1998) in contrast to the prevailing conservative ideologies (Gutek, 1997) espoused by many of the school staff and community. This OIP recommends school leaders use authentic leadership strategies (George, 2016) to guide a collaborative team through the change process.

The significance of this OIP lies in recommendations provided for empowering the entire school community in a cultural change to improve student engagement. This OIP will be of interest to school administrators interested in creating cultural change.

Keywords: student engagement, organizational change, authentic leadership, change process, cultural change, school culture.

Executive Summary

This Organizational Improvement Plan (OIP) considers how formal and informal school leaders can change the culture of a school to engage disengaged students, in an Alberta school. For the purposes of this OIP, formal school leaders include principals and vice-principals. Informal school leaders may include influential teachers, parents, students or other members of the school community. The definition of student engagement used in this OIP is "the extent to which students identify with and value schooling outcomes, have a sense of belonging at school, participate in academic and non-academic activities, strive to meet the formal requirements of schooling and make a serious personal investment in learning" (Willms, Friesen, & Milton, 2009, p. 7). Culture is defined as "a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration" (Schein, 2010, p. 17).

A key learning from the engagement literature includes the notion that student engagement is a multidimensional concept in that it contains affective, behavioural, and cognitive components (Appleton, Christenson, & Furlong, 2008). Fredricks, Blumenfeld and Paris (2004) argue that all three types of engagement should be studied together since attempts to alter one or to alter the context will impact all components.

A strategy used to investigate the problem in the OIP is to analyze the context for students in Alberta schools. A PESTE (Cawsey, Deszca, & Ingols, 2016) analysis illuminated prevalent conservative values in the province, yet a mix of liberal and conservative beliefs among school staff members. An equity audit revealed that teachers have far less diverse identities than their students. The dominant leadership strategy

seems to be Leader-Member Exchange (Northouse, 2013) in which leaders provide greater levels of resources to those who have a positive relationship with the leader.

One conclusion reached in the OIP is that the strategies of critical pedagogy would be most likely to engage disengaged students. The OIP recommends strategies suggested by Freire (1971, 1998) in which students have influence over the content and structure of their education and they become free to fully participate in their world. Engagement is experienced when the curriculum is connected to students' lives and experiences (Harris, 2010).

In this OIP, authentic leadership (George, 2016) is the preferred leadership strategy to initiate the desired cultural changes. An authentic leader possesses the ability to build relationships, the will to empower followers, the insight of self-awareness, and an ethical intent. Using these characteristics, the authentic leader will encourage engagement of the school community in order to develop a community solution to the problem of disengagement.

The change process suggested follows the Change Path Model (Cawsey et al. 2016) with the influence of critical theory (Grieves, 2016). The change leader leverages the creativity of a diverse community to develop and communicate a shared vision. The community involvement leads to a new culture in which there are many leaders and more engaged students.

In the new school culture, collaborative learning experiences for all lead to new ways of acting and interacting. A diverse change team guides the process. The school will recognize success through increased students self-reporting engagement, increased student attendance, and anecdotal evidence of more students who appear to be engaged.

Dedication

To my students, past and present: Thank you for all you have taught me.

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Organizational Context

Introduction

This organizational improvement plan (OIP) focuses on how educational leaders can change the culture of a school in order to engage students who are disengaged. I have become aware of the problem of disengaged students through my work in schools in Alberta.

This OIP considers an urban Alberta public school of approximately 350 students from Grades 7 to 9. The school promotes conservative values. Conservatives value traditions and traditional institutions (Gianesin & Bonaker, 2003; Gutek, 1997). For example, the school entry is adorned with awards won in the arts and sports. The school also proudly displays the names of students who have achieved high academic grades. The school is more than 50 years old and the procedures by which it operates have changed very little since its early years.

Preparing students for employment is a significant goal for conservatives (Gutek, 1997). According to conservative beliefs, students need to learn the information that is going to help them become successful contributors to society. In addition to the regular curriculum, the school offers optional classes that are relevant to future employment. These include foods, fashion, cosmetology, first aid, leadership and industrial arts. These classes fulfill the conservative task of preparing students to enter the work world as positive contributors.

This Alberta junior high school has a reputation for positive student behavior. Several staff members focus on monitoring student behavior including the principal, vice

principal, two counselors, a social worker, a learning assistant who works with students who have had past behavioral struggles, and a police officer who is assigned to the school for at least one day per week. These staff members help students learn positive behaviors that will hopefully lead them to successful lives beyond school. In the conservative view, behavior is culturally transmitted (Gianesin & Bonaker, 2003; Gutek, 1997) and these adults are transmitting perceptions of culturally preferred behavior. Students in this school are mostly obedient and complete their work, which is generally regarded as successful.

The conservative approach to education promotes traditional knowledge, focusing particularly on mathematics, science, language, and history (Gutek, 1997). In the school considered in this OIP, traditional content areas are promoted and celebrated. Teachers are held accountable for teaching these traditional subject areas, which are tested through Provincial Achievement Tests (PATs) in mathematics, science, language arts and social studies at the end of Grade 9. Teachers prepare the Grade 7 and 8 students for the PATs by having them write similar tests in the same subjects at the end of each grade. The school has a history of average Grade 9 PAT scores that are slightly above the provincial average. Most teachers in the school would credit preparation strategies for the students' success with the PATs.

Political Context

The study of this school and student engagement needs to be situated within the existing political context. Vibert and Shields (2003) noticed that social, cultural and political contexts are required for an understanding of student engagement. The political lens through which a teacher or researcher views engagement will determine the level

and type of engagement the teacher or researcher recognizes. Those who hold conservative values see engagement as a teacher-initiated scenario in which students are involved and interested. The focus is on transmitting traditional knowledge and the purpose of education is seen as enabling students to participate in the world and be successful in the labor market (Vibert and Shields, 2003, p.227).

In the province of Alberta, the pervasive educational politics have been neoliberal policies that promote market-based reforms including accountability, data-driven decision-making, and a culture of testing (Barkan, 2010). Barkan made a clear connection between conservative values and neoliberal policy: "higher curriculum standards" are promoted (by neoliberal policies) in an effort to maintain the status quo of traditional subjects areas (p.85). Those subjects that are rigorously tested and used to evaluate schools are given more time and attention than those that are informally or locally assessed.

Neoliberal political influences (Ryan, 2012) have promoted the use of PATs in Grades 3, 6, and 9 in Alberta. These tests hold teachers accountable to society for producing excellent results. If an engaging education leads to increased test results, then it is a positive educational strategy. The neoliberal strategy is to standardize curriculum in order to focus on improving test results rather than accommodating diversity to increase engagement (Ryan, 2012, p.3).

The neoliberal influence (Ryan, 2012) is also evident in the emphasis that Alberta Education, the provincial ministry, places on the "entrepreneurial spirit" which includes competitiveness, risk-taking, willingness to change, and partnerships with community businesses (Alberta Education, 2010). In 2010, the Government of Alberta released a

proposal for changing education in Alberta. This plan, *Inspiring Education* (Alberta Education, 2010), mentions making education student centered, but it also emphasizes preparing students for the labor market and ensuring that they will be able to compete in the world economy (Alberta Education, 2010). The document promotes qualitative measures of assessment to determine whether the quality of education is being maintained. The New Democratic Party was elected to govern Alberta in 2015, so there may be changes to the proposed direction of education in Alberta. In June 2016, the Government of Alberta announced an extensive curriculum review and rewrite, but details of the changes have not yet been determined (French, 2016).

Vision, Mission and Values

Leaders need to have a vision. English (2008) asserted that leaders provide focus for a cause (p. 15). A clearly stated vision provides focus for an organization and assists all members of the organization in finding their role in keeping the organization progressing in a commonly understood direction (Northouse, 2013). The school community in this OIP does not seem to have a clear vision on which to focus its efforts. It has a list of strategic priorities, but no action plan for how to improve in any particular area. At staff meetings there are discussions about the school goals for each school year, however, there is no plan for change nor are the goals revisited during the year. In the absence of clear communication about school goals by its leaders, the school community has not yet developed consensus on how to improve. I argue that maintaining the current status is not a vision.

The mission statements of the school and district include a commitment to providing the highest quality education to the students. However, there is disagreement

over the meaning of "education of the highest quality." For some teachers, the most important goal is to increase or maintain PAT scores. Other teachers are working toward finding ways for all students to experience success. Both the lack of vision and vague mission statements in the school and district appear to impede the change process.

The school and district mission statements also refer to partnerships with home, school, and community. If the school is going to enact meaningful change, change leaders must cultivate these partnerships. A school culture in which the entire school community collaborates to empower and engage all students is vitally important for the change process. A shared, clear vision takes time to develop and likely will not be evident at the beginning of the change process. The context and stakeholders involved in the change will impact the change process (Cawsey, Deszca & Ingols, 2016). Going through an intentional change process as a community will realize part of the goal of engaging the whole school community.

Leadership Practices

In the district focused on in this plan, school principals have limited teaching assignments to allow them more administrative time. Principals are the face of the schools in the community. They meet with parent councils regularly and lead community celebrations. Leithwood and Jantzi (2000) found that principals do not directly influence student engagement. School leaders do have significant influence on student learning (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008), but weak direct impact on student engagement (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000). Principals impact student engagement through their influence on school conditions. School conditions, in turn, influence teachers' and parents' attitudes toward the school. Family educational culture has a significant effect on

student engagement, and possibly more influence than school variables (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000). Factors of family educational culture include family work habits, health and nutrition, academic guidance and support, and occupational aspirations. If principals can positively influence the attitudes of parents toward school, they can indirectly improve student engagement. Leadership style will be a significant factor in how effective an administrator is in ultimately influencing teachers and parents.

The dominant leadership style in the school in this OIP appears to be leader-member exchange, or LMX (Northouse, 2013). I do not believe that the principal and vice principal have consciously chosen this style, but I recognize the qualities of LMX theory in their behaviors. LMX is "a process that is centered on the interactions between leaders and followers" (Northouse, 2013, p. 161). When there is high quality LMX, "leaders provide greater levels of resources in terms of tacit information, interesting task assignments, and autonomy in return for subordinate task behaviors when compared with lower quality LMX relationships" (Burch & Guarana, 2015, p.10).

The leader follower relationships in a school include the relationships between the administrators and the teachers. In the school discussed in this OIP, the teachers who are early implementers of practices promoted by Alberta Education have more positive interactions with administrators. As well, the teachers who promote a positive image of the school in the community through sports, arts and service projects have higher LMX (Northouse, 2013). Those teachers who do not participate in extracurricular activities or who are reluctant to engage in local or provincial initiatives are often excluded from informal discussion about programming and students and therefore have less influence in decision-making.

In a school, the leader follower relationship also holds in the relationships between administration and parents. In informal discussions between parents and administration, the parents who are involved in school activities have their voices heard more than do those parents who do not attend school functions. Experienced teachers, who are familiar with meet the teacher nights and school open houses should agree that the parents who attend these events generally have positive experiences with school and their children are often successful. However, parents who do not attend school functions are often those who have not had positive schooling experiences themselves and are not as inclined to come to the school and engage in conversation with the administrators. Arguably, their negative relationship with school endures in their children's school experience.

In the practice of LMX, "a better relationship with the leader will cause followers to reciprocate with higher levels of personal investment" (Burch & Guarana, 2015, p.19). However, parents or teachers who "perceive themselves to be in low versus high LMX relationships…will be more likely to…form cynical attitudes about the organization" (Davis & Gardner, 2004, p.451). The community in the school in this study consists of "in-groups" and "out-groups" (Davis & Gardner, 2004, p.445), creating the condition that some followers are ignored, marginalized, or oppressed (Davis & Gardner, 2004).

History of the School

Culture is impacted by the founders of a group and is then formed by a shared history (Schein, 2010). For this OIP, culture is defined as "a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to

be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems" (Schein, 2010). Schein (2010) asserted that change leaders need to understand the culture in order to manipulate powerful cultural forces. Misunderstanding cultural assumptions can lead to ineffectiveness in motivating change. Change agents become analysts of the culture, which involves "hidden and complex aspects of life in groups" (Schein, 2010, p. 9).

The school discussed here is over 50 years old and has a culture established by history and traditions. The school website boasts of the programs offered by experienced teachers. They hold particular celebrations every year including Spirit Days, Pi Day, Pink Shirt Day, and a talent show. The school has always celebrated successes in sports and the arts. Staff members organize or participate in many service projects that maintain a virtuous school image. These traditions are a vital part of the school culture.

The staff includes approximately 20 teachers and 10 support staff including a librarian, a mental health worker and learning assistants. Only three of the teachers have less than 5 years of experience. More than half of the staff members have over 12 years of experience. Staff members know each other well. There is a collective understanding and acceptance of the different ways that each person works with and relates to students. Staff members share established norms and basic assumptions about teaching and learning. A leader who is working toward change in an environment like the one in this school would be well advised to get to know the time-honored understandings.

Problem of Practice

Educational leaders beliefs and assumptions about the purpose of education and the roles of teachers and students will impact their beliefs about student engagement in

both teacher-led curricular and extracurricular activities (Vibert & Shields, 2003). How can formal leaders (including principals and vice principals) and informal school leaders (such as effective teachers) provide opportunities for greater engagement in the learning process for all students by changing school culture?

Perspectives on the Problem of Practice

There are always multiple ways of looking at a problem, and each way will bring different elements into clearer view. I will highlight the problem of disengaged students in a particular Alberta school from the perspective of the historical context first, and then from the theoretical context of Bolman and Deal's (2013) four frame theory which includes the structural frame, the human resources frame, the political frame, and the symbolic frame.

Historical Context of the Problem

Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004) noted that engagement is a popular topic of study because it is seen as a method through which to attain school commitment from students who have been alienated. They view the study of engagement from a humanistic standpoint; they believe that student engagement is malleable and that teachers and school based administrators can find ways to make positive changes. In my experience, I have witnessed school staff members blaming students and parents for a lack of student engagement with school. Frequently, teachers suggest that the student or family needs to make changes so that students will be more engaged with school. If Fredricks et al. (2004) are correct in their position that alienated students can become engaged in school depending on the actions of teachers and administrators, then educators have a responsibility to work as a collaborative community to make some changes.

The Government of Alberta appointed a committee to consult with the Alberta public about education from 2008 to 2010. The resulting report, *Inspiring Education* (Alberta Education, 2010), encapsulates the vision for the future of Alberta Education. Albertans communicated that they want youth to be engaged thinkers and ethical citizens with entrepreneurial spirit. An engaged thinker has the ability to collaborate and to think critically and creatively, and is competent in many areas (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 5). Being ethical includes fostering relationships, contributing to community and being empathetic and responsible. Students with an entrepreneurial spirit will become resourceful, self-reliant and competitive in the work world. The consultations also uncovered that Albertans expect schools to be learner-centered and connected to community partners (Alberta Education, 2010). To make these changes in the education system, educators will need to change how we relate with our community. Community relationships can be improved when partners view each other in new ways.

Theoretical Framework

In their presentation of the four frame theory, Bolman and Deal (2013) argued that the way people in an organization frame their circumstances will impact the outcome of a scenario. Bolman and Deal (2013) demonstrated how each frame can provide a different way to react to conditions in an organization. By looking at a scenario through the structural frame, human resource frame, political frame, and symbolic frame a change agent can choose the action most likely to achieve the preferred outcome. When a leader looks through one frame, he or she should not disregard the strengths of the other frames. Leaders need to practice using multiple frames so that they can think creatively about different challenges.

Structural frame. Looking at the school organization in this OIP using the structural frame, we can observe conflict and disagreement. According to this frame, common goals are important to an organization. In this school, teachers disagree on goals. For some teachers, the most important goal is to increase (or maintain) PAT scores. School test scores from spring 2015 were higher than the provincial average and higher than those of other comparable junior high schools. Other teachers are still working toward the goal set under the previous administration to find ways for all students to experience success. There is conflict because some teachers focus on teaching students to succeed on the tests, while others focus on allowing students to discover areas of personal interest within the curriculum. The "diverse efforts" (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 45) of teachers are not working together in an integrated school effort.

Human resource frame. The human resource frame illuminates how the school serves the needs of some people, but disregards the needs of others. An assumption within this model is that workers require autonomy and purpose in their roles (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 117). In a school, different teachers have different needs and therefore pursue different goals. This particular school has many excellent, well-paid, and experienced teachers. On Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 122), most teaching staff is at the upper levels, working on a sense of accomplishment. Recognition and respect are usually achieved with students who are already interested in school and have involved parents. Teachers are less likely to attempt a project with students who are disinterested and have uninvolved parents because the project would be more difficult to begin and less likely to succeed.

Political frame. Looking through the political frame, we notice how competition for scarce resources further divides groups with divergent interests in this school. A lack of resources, such as money and influence, is a constant source of conflict in a school. Groups of teachers and parents with common interests work together to influence how resources should be allocated. Teachers may be powerful when they have experience and expertise in highly valued subject areas, such as fine arts, language arts, or mathematics. Some teachers will be rewarded with better schedules, furniture, supplies, or praise. Members of marginalized groups have great difficulty in gaining influence.

Change leaders need to be adept at strategic thinking (Fairholm, 2009). People in an organization who have influence can halt change if they do not agree with the change plan. Leaders need to be aware of more than just the plan; they need to be aware of how people could possibly react to the plan. Fairholm (2009) advised leaders to have an excellent understanding of the context of their school so that they can anticipate obstacles to progress (p. 3) in order to be prepared for them. Leaders need to understand the formal and informal organization values to ensure that the change plan works throughout the organization (Fairholm, 2009).

Symbolic frame. When considering this school through the symbolic frame, the school's rich history of tradition, excellence, faith, and arts can be highlighted. Staff members perpetuate and celebrate a mythology of faith and hard work. They do an excellent job of promoting news about outstanding work within the school community and the city in general. There are established contacts between staff members and the local media. In addition, the school has accounts on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram,

which are used to disseminate messages of success in arts, sports, academics and community service.

However, there are also two guidance counselors, a full time social worker, an addictions counselor, a police resource officer and a mental health advocate working with students. These people do excellent work with struggling students, but they do not often receive public recognition. Their work is not part of the celebrated story. The diversity of the student population is not communicated or celebrated.

Review of Literature on Engagement

Defining engagement. An important step in a study of engagement is to establish a shared understanding of what we mean by the term *engagement*. Appleton, Christenson, and Furlong (2008) found 19 different definitions for the construct of engagement, which is also called *academic engagement*, *school engagement*, and *student engagement*. All researchers identified by Appleton et al. (2008) agreed that engagement is a multidimensional concept that includes from two to four components within the concept. Various models include behavioral, affective, and cognitive subtypes and a possible psychological subtype. The authors' preferred term is *student engagement* because it can include the influence of factors that are not within the physical and temporal boundaries of the school. Student engagement involves many components in combination and therefore should be considered a metaconstruct (Appleton et al., 2008). Additionally, student engagement is a construct with relevance for all students since increased engagement leads to improved outcomes for all students.

Fredricks et al. (2004) provided a thorough review of the literature on student engagement from the late 1980s to 2004. The authors identified three types of

engagement: behavioral, emotional, and cognitive. They asserted that the three should be studied together since "attempts to alter context influence all three" (Fredricks et al., 2004, p.61). As well, the context in which engagement is studied needs to include social and academic contexts both in the classroom and in the school as a whole.

Willms, Friesen, and Milton (2009) provided a single definition of student engagement and identified three types: social, academic, and intellectual engagement. The term "academic engagement" seems to me to be a misnomer because the authors are referring to the level of participation and behaviors during class time. This type of engagement is more commonly referred to as *behavioral engagement* (Willms et al., 2009). School factors that improve student engagement are positive relationships between student and teacher and teaching strategies that are rigorous, relevant, and meaningful (Willms et al., 2009, p. 29). Students are most interested and successful when the level of instructional challenge meets their level of skill. When students do work that is too easy for them, they can become bored; work that is too difficult leads to frustration. Just the right challenge is most engaging.

For this OIP, I use the Willms et al. (2009) definition of student engagement as "the extent to which students identify with and value schooling outcomes, have a sense of belonging at school, participate in academic and non-academic activities strive to meet the formal requirements of schooling, and make a serious personal investment in learning" (p. 7). I consider the three types of engagement as affective, behavioral and cognitive, but consider all three together as they are interrelated.

Critical theory perspective of engagement. Critical theory began with the work of Paulo Freire (1971). Freire's view is that students must be involved in their education.

When they have some influence over the content and structure of their own education, it becomes "liberating" (Freire, 1971, p.67). Education can free students from oppressive structures (educational, economic, political, or social) by allowing them to fully participate in their world. Having students who fully participate in their education is part of increasing student engagement. According to Freire (1971), educational systems can be transformed when all people involved are able to participate in the decision-making process. I agree that all students need to be able to participate in their education, and I extend that argument to suggest that participating in education is more than just being told you can participate; it requires that all students be shown how they fit into the educational experience. Students must be able to recognize something of themselves in their education.

Critical pedagogy is meant to examine the world as students themselves experience it (McMahon, 2003). Engagement is experienced when the curriculum is connected to students' lives and experiences (Harris, 2010). These conclusions add weight to the argument that if students are presented with curricular content in a manner that allows them to clearly connect it to their lives, they will be more engaged with the content. If school is connected to their lives in a meaningful way, students will engage more with the school experience.

McMahon (2003) promoted critical pedagogy and antiracist education together as the preferred way to attain student engagement. In this method, teachers "move beyond assumptions of neutrality" (McMahon, 2003, p.259) in exploring issues that connect the prescribed curriculum to social, economic, and political realities in their students' lives. School-based administrators and teachers are responsible for creating conditions in their

schools that allow students to become active participants in their own education. McMahon (2003) stated, "The onus is on teachers and administrators to create inclusive climates that foster student engagement" (p. 262). Educators need to take steps to influence disengaged students to become empowered, cognitively engaged students.

Engagement as a social justice issue. Leaders who espouse critical theory consider the needs of all, particularly those who are oppressed or marginalized. Schools need to connect curriculum to student reality (McMahon, 2003, p. 260) in order to engage students. Again, it is the responsibility of school-based administrators and teachers to create conditions in schools so that students can become active participants in their own education. Schools could begin to do this by incorporating elements of the students' home culture into the school and classroom culture. When students recognize elements of themselves in school, they will become more engaged.

Smyth, McInerney, and Fish (2013) asserted that schools need to become relational places where students can work to create their identities as successful people (p.311). Students will be much more engaged in their schooling experiences when they have the opportunity to voice their opinions in meaningful ways. They need opportunities to express themselves and to be heard. Again, I am advocating for making schools more personally relevant for students. They should be able to recognize how elements of their identity are acknowledged in the school experience.

Parsons and Taylor (2011) presented an Alberta perspective on student engagement as part of a province-wide initiative to increase student engagement. They viewed engagement as an issue of equity (Parsons & Taylor, 2011, p.10) because students who are not currently engaged with school, due to disability or belonging to the

nondominant culture must have their needs considered before they will experience engagement. Once students realize that their needs are being met at school, they will be more able and willing to participate in school.

Gaydos (2008) found that school identification, which was recognized as including behavioral and emotional components, was considered an indicator of student engagement. Their findings showed that the value students place on school and the level of student-teacher relationships predicted how much students identify with their school. Perceived curriculum and program demands had minimal influence on school identification. In contrast, students who failed one or more classes did not disengage; instead they identified more with school. A possible explanation could be that struggling students who received more help from teachers or specific school programs felt a stronger sense of belonging to their school.

Harris (2010) found that in order to achieve the highest level of student engagement, teaching strategies must be student centered and the teacher must give up some control (p. 138). Since the teachers in that study reported that they required involvement from other school staff and the wider community in order to achieve this level of engagement, a cultural change is required in schools. The cultural changes include school staff members rethinking their view of students, the teacher's role, and the structure of schooling (Harris, 2010, p. 144). Students are unique individuals, and each of them needs help finding his or her fit with school. The teacher must enter into relationship with students and their culture in order to better understand their needs. Schools should be places where ideas are shared and everyone feels able and welcome to participate.

PESTE Analysis

Before engaging in any change process, change agents need to have a thorough understanding of the context within which they work. A PESTE analysis will help change leaders to anticipate coming changes and adapt to contextual changes that have already begun. PESTE analysis looks at five aspects of an organization's context: political, economic, sociological, technological, and ecological/environmental (Cawsey et al., 2016, p.38). A PESTE analysis leads organizational leaders to explicitly take notice of trends in external factors influencing their people and structures. Conducting a PESTE factors analysis involves examining each of the five aspects individually in order to better understand the multitude of influences and their impact on the school.

Currently, in the school considered in this OIP, not all stakeholders recognize the need for change. However, an understanding of PESTE aspects and the wider context can become the necessary driver for change. A clearer understanding of context can inform stakeholders who may misunderstand the aspects involved with student engagement in school.

Cultural beliefs may be based on misinformation that can be cleared up by sharing facts relevant to the situation. A PESTE analysis can be useful to help identify assumptions in the school culture. Comparing the current school culture to the broader culture in our changing world, can reveal some of our unconscious assumptions (Schein, 2010).

It is important for school leaders to recognize that factors outside their school may have significance. Trends occurring externally to the school can affect the need for change, and the nature of change.

In analyzing the political factors that have an effect on Alberta schools, I focus on the provincial political situation, since education is a provincial responsibility. A New Democratic Party government was elected in Alberta less than one year ago. The previous Conservative government had begun work toward some education reforms. These reforms have continued, but with a reduced sense of urgency. Alberta Education is promoting the notion that students should be ethical citizens and engaged thinkers with an entrepreneurial spirit (Alberta Education, 2010). A process had begun to phase out the PATs, but it has been put on hold until further consultation is done. As discussed earlier, in the school in this OIP, there is a difference of opinion between conservative teachers who want to maintain high PAT scores and liberal-thinking teachers who want to allow students to feel empowered and to have the ability to impact their own learning. In addition, many vocal parents with conservative views support learning the way it was when they were in school.

The most pertinent economic aspect at this time is the low price of oil. Many Alberta parents have lost their jobs, or fear losing their jobs. The Government of Alberta has also lost revenue as a result of reduced income from oil royalties. As a result, any changes made to increase engagement should not involve a large expenditure for the school district. Also, changes in school culture should be implemented with consideration for how to engage unemployed parents in a manner that benefits both the parents and the students.

There are several sociological factors at work in the school community in this OIP. Recently, the Government of Alberta has mandated that schools provide a teacher-supervised gay straight alliance group for students when students request such a group. In

addition, all school boards must have a policy regarding support for transgender students. The traditional and conservative school community in this OIP struggles with issues of gender diversity, but consistently responds with a message that demonstrates support for all students because they are all valued.

Another issue related to diversity that occupies the school community in this OIP is how to accommodate recent immigrants. There are some negative stereotypes about refugees in general and about Syrian refugees in particular. Educational leaders need to negotiate these new relationships carefully in order to ensure a positive experience for both the newcomers and established residents in the school community.

A final sociological concern is that some parents in the school community have had negative experiences in their own schooling. When parents have adverse feelings toward school, they can pass on these feelings to their children, which can negatively impact engagement (Fredricks et al., 2004). There are parents in this school community who do not attend school functions, or engage directly with the school, but do voice negative opinions about the school whether it maintains the status quo or changes. Change leaders need to determine how best to manage these parents during the change process.

Technological factors also need to be considered in the change process. In particular, social media can be a profound aid or inhibitor to the change process, depending on its use. School leaders need to use social media to communicate change and celebrate success. As well, students are frequently experts in the use of social media and schools must learn to accommodate students' use of their own devices (Willms et al., 2009).

Finally, a PESTE analysis considers both physical environmental concerns and trends in the world environment. Some Alberta school communities have experienced flooding and have taken measures toward flood mitigation. Some students have been displaced or their homes have been threatened by floods. New projects in schools should be undertaken with consideration for parents and students who may be experiencing such housing insecurity.

There are limitations to the PESTE analysis. The factors are so far-reaching that it is difficult to know which ones will have an impact. Some of the factors will have a greater impact than others, but the tool does not differentiate between factors. School leaders may have difficulty determining which factor to focus on. Each factor is changing at a different rate and may have changed by the time an organization knows how to deal with it. The anticipated outcome of a PESTE analysis is awareness of context, not control of context.

Equity Audit

The Equity Continuum (Murray & West-Burns, 2011) is a tool intended for use in schools to determine cultural responsiveness. This tool is based on research in the areas of culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally responsive pedagogy. The authors have identified seven areas for equitable practice in schools and classrooms. The seven tenets identified are: (a) classroom climate and instruction; (b) school climate; (c) student voice and space; (d) family/caregiver-school relations; (e) school leadership; (f) community connections; and (g) culture of professional development (Murray & West-Burns, 2011, p.5). Using these seven areas, they have developed questions to help educational leaders identify areas of strength or recommended growth regarding equity work in their schools.

Each question can be answered on a scale from 0 to 4. Specific indicators of each question are provided so that change leaders will understand what to look for in the school environment as they complete the audit.

Bolman and Deal (2013), have recommended an equity audit to ensure all stakeholders feel ownership of the change process. An equity audit encourages autonomy by using the strengths of all, allowing teachers choice in how they implement changes, and determining equitable dispersal of resources. Another important goal of an equity audit is to encourage participation by keeping stakeholders informed, having teachers take some leadership, flattening hierarchical structures, and enhancing links between teachers.

Many equity audits have been written for use in business or corporate environments, but the Equity Continuum (Murray & West-Burns, 2011) is specifically designed for classrooms, schools and school districts. The questions are written with consideration of students and with a focus on student-centered learning environments.

The practicality of the Equity Continuum (Murray & West-Burns, 2011) is a significant strength for users. It is published in a booklet that an auditor can carry as he or she walks through a school to determine the cultural responsiveness of classes and the school in general. The specific indicators listed below each question are helpful in determining where on the continuum the school lies. There is less chance of inconsistent findings by different evaluators because the tool lists very specific “equity look-fors,” such as “posters/displays/signage [that] connects to equity and social justice” (Murray & West-Burns, 2011, p.12).

I also appreciate that the audit is scaled on a continuum, rather than requiring only a positive or negative response. Sometimes a school is partially fulfilling an expectation and that can be indicated in the Equity Continuum (Murray & West-Burns, 2011). Furthermore, this tool can be used to review the progress of a school over a period of time. The space for notes at the bottom of each page allows a reviewer to date entries and go back to the continuum to measure growth at a later date. The authors have clearly written this audit so that educators can use it as a working document.

The Equity Continuum (Murray & West-Burns, 2011) suggests that leadership teams be composed of people representing diversity similar to the diversity of the students in their care. As well, the teaching staff should reflect the diversity of their students. In the school district considered here, the leadership team is composed, primarily, of white men. However, more than half of the teaching staff is female and the school leadership is composed of both men and women. The male female split should be close to even to reflect the gender diversity in students.

The cultural diversity of a teaching staff and of the change team should also reflect the cultural diversity of the students. With many new immigrant families moving into Canada, there are students who speak languages other than English and it may be difficult to reflect such diversity in the staff. First Nations people are underrepresented in school staffs, so this is an area where growth is needed. Parent council and other parent organizations should also represent a variety of cultures and viewpoints. Including a diverse group of parents in decision-making could be achieved if change leaders are aware of the importance of recruiting a wide range of people with diverse identities for the change team.

School and classroom climates vary between schools in the same district and between classrooms within the same school. Teachers who have an awareness of social injustice are likely to be more inclined to support a classroom or school climate that celebrates diversity. Schools should be welcoming to all persons. The Alberta Human Rights Act (2015) identifies that "all persons are equal in: dignity, rights and responsibilities without regard to race, religious beliefs, colour, gender, gender identity, gender expression, physical disability, mental disability, age, ancestry, place of origin, marital status, source of income, family status or sexual orientation" (p.2). Some leaders are more mindful of equity issues than other leaders. The *Equity Continuum* (Murray & West-Burns, 2011) can help those who have not adequately addressed equity issues to recognize their shortfalls.

Relationships with parents are important to the equity audit and to my problem of practice. Partnerships with diverse community members benefits student engagement and improve the change process. Completion of an equity audit can alert change leaders that they are not engaging stakeholders with diverse identities within the community. Stakeholders will be far more willing to participate in the implementation of change if they feel that their voices or the voices of their representative have been heard.

The Equity Continuum (Murray & West-Burns, 2011) is very detailed and seems to be intended for use as a change agent tours a school and notes the presence or lack of equity indicators. It is best used for one school at a time, not for an entire district. This is a small scale, specific tool useful for discovering details that might otherwise be ignored.

The results of an equity audit rely on the point of view of the person who is completing the audit. Some auditors may be more acutely aware of the indicators and

their significance than others. For example, if a person from a marginalized group is completing the audit, she may be more aware of the significance of particular displays in a school than is a person from a dominant group. The tool's usefulness depends on the skill and perspective of the person using it.

Analysis of Tell Them From Me Survey

The Tell Them From Me (Learning Bar, 2016) survey is an anonymous web-based survey intended to identify strengths and weaknesses of a school or district in the areas of student engagement, student wellness and school or classroom climate. There are three formats for the school survey, one intended for student response, one for teachers, and one for parent response. The response items include standard items such as "At school I feel accepted for who I am" or "I worry more than most kids" which are rated on a scale from 1 to 5 (Learning Bar, 2016). There are also customizable items that can be chosen by individual schools or districts. Data are collected and translated into graphs by a private company, The Learning Bar. Individual schools and jurisdictions receive suggestions about interpreting and using the data to make changes. The promotional material that accompanies the testing package promotes community engagement. The Learning Bar, Inc. recommends publicizing how the results of the survey impact change and decision-making (Learning Bar, 2016).

It is important that the change leader within the school conducts a diagnostic analysis of the primary data. Koziol and Arthur (n.d.) have explained that researchers who use secondary data need to be familiar with the results from the original study. School leaders should read the original results to understand what the data show about how their students experience schooling. When using the Tell Them From Me (Learning

Bar, 2016) survey, school leaders can determine for themselves whether the average score (mean) on a question is more significant than the most frequent score (mode), rather than having just the mean score reported. As well, our school accommodates five different programs. The Tell Them From Me (Learning Bar, 2016) results package graphs the data only according to grade level, but a school leader could determine whether or not students from different programs feel a stronger sense of belonging or engagement. Furthermore, school leaders need to have an awareness of outliers – scores that do not fall within the regular pattern of the data (Koziol &Arthur, n.d.). The students who are represented by the irregular scores are students who are different from the large body of students, and they may not be having their needs addressed at school. If leaders look only at data after they are interpreted, they will miss valuable information about how different students are experiencing school.

This survey tool is promoted by Alberta Education and is used in many Alberta school districts. The development of the surveys was based on research and informed by the work of Dr. Doug Willms. The surveys are easily accessed and results are easy to interpret. Change can be measured by repeating the survey in future years.

During February 2013 and 2016, the Tell Them From Me (Learning Bar, Inc., 2016) survey was completed in the school district in this OIP. Each time schools received the results, they were discussed at a staff meeting. Areas of strength and weakness were identified and then nothing further was done. In 2013, the low engagement data based on a group of Grade 9 students was dismissed because that particular group was seen as problematic. In 2016, the survey results showed that in class measures were high and out of class measures were low. More specifically, the results showed that teaching methods

were rigorous and classes were engaging. However, a low percentage of students were involved in extracurricular activities. As well, surprisingly high numbers of the students were using tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs. This drug usage corresponds to a high level of depression and anxiety. All of these results indicate that some changes are necessary in the school community.

Questions Emerging From the Problem of Practice

All intentional change processes require questioning. As Gunter (2005) pointed out, educators in the field "challenge what is being done or might be done, to affirm stability and/or to deliver change" (p. 165). If change leaders are going to do something other than maintain the status quo, they need to ask questions about why things are as they are and why are they not something different. Up to this point, this OIP has described the status quo, mainly in a particular school, but also generally in Alberta schools. From this examination of the state of engagement in Alberta schools, four questions emerge.

First, the culture of schooling embraces conservatism. Changing the culture of a school requires changing some firmly held beliefs and assumptions. How can a school culture be changed?

Second, changing the school culture to be more engaging for students means that all students must be allowed to voice their opinions on schooling in a meaningful way. When students see themselves fitting into the educational culture, they will become more engaged. How can students realistically influence their own education?

Third, listening to the voices of all students will illuminate the reality that different students have different experiences within the same school system. Why do different students experience school so differently?

Fourth, change in engagement must acknowledge the diversity of the school community. Creating positive change for all students requires that a diverse group of people work together in the change process. How can a school assemble a team in which the diversity of a school is represented?

Leaders intending to create change in student engagement need to find the answers to these four questions.

Leadership Focused Vision for Change and Leadership Philosophy

Change leaders are able to articulate the gap between the present and the future envisioned state. In this OIP there is a gap between the current school culture that is engaging for many students and a collaborative culture that engages a diverse student community. The change leader employs a particular leadership philosophy in order to develop the envisioned culture.

In order for a school to make cultural changes that would increase student engagement, the leader of the change process needs to be able to develop positive relationships, share control of the process, be open to change, and balance the values of diverse group members. I recommend that school administration implement strategies usually associated with what is known as *authentic leadership* (Avolio & Gardner, 2005).

The leader of this change process needs to develop relationships with all stakeholders in the change process. I believe that all staff members need to experience the individualized support of administrators. As identified by Leithwood and Jantzi (2000),

teachers have more influence than administrators on student engagement (p.124), so it is important that administrators provide teachers with the resources they need to positively impact student engagement.

It is important to note that student engagement is "susceptible to influence by those outside the classroom" (Leithwood & Jantzi, p. 125). Therefore, including all parents in significant school decision-making is important in engaging all students. Leaders need to make a significant effort to make welcome those parents who have not otherwise had positive school experiences. In addition to parents, other adults involved in the lives of students should be made to feel comfortable in the school. An authentic leader has the ability to balance the diverse values of the various stakeholders. This could be enacted by gathering input from all staff and parents in our school community.

The mission statements of many schools and districts refer to the implementation of partnerships with home, school, and community. A school culture in which the entire school community collaborates to empower and engage all students is the working vision for this change process. Fullan (1996) argued that in order to enact meaningful change in schools, change leaders must understand the complexities of change and link teacher development with school development. Change is a nonlinear process with pieces that leaders need to recognize. Diversity and conflict should be embraced in order to attain lasting change. A shared, clear vision takes time to develop and likely will not be evident at the beginning of the change process. The context and stakeholders involved in the change will impact the change process (Cawsey et al., 2016). Therefore, change leaders need to be prepared for the vision to be revised through a collaborative change process.

Going through the change process as a community will realize part of the goal of engaging the whole school community.

Organizational Change Readiness

Cawsey et al. (2016) argued that organizational change will not happen if members do not perceive the need. People might ignore signs that change is necessary because they have become complacent, their needs are being served, or they have become cynical about warning signs (Cawsey et al., 2016).

In the school of this OIP, leaders have ignored signs that change is necessary because they have consulted a limited set of indicators. The provincial achievement testing for Grades 3, 6 and 9 began in Alberta's neoliberal climate of 1982. These tests measure only one indicator of student success. They reveal only a small part of students' learning, so we cannot use them to demonstrate that students' needs are being served.

To convince others that change is necessary, change agents can use external or internal data, or the perspectives of stakeholders. Data about student engagement collected through the Tell Them From Me survey (Learning Bar, 2016) can be used to convince school staff members that more should be done to engage students. The results of the survey from 2013, showed that approximately 45% of Grade 9 students were not excited about school and nearly 50% did not feel a sense of belonging. However, the staff chose to ignore these results because they felt that the results were due to a particularly disengaged group of students rather than the result of school conditions. Perhaps this group of disengaged students was important and worth paying attention to.

Bryk (2015) clearly pointed out that there is always variability in student outcomes. The system works well for some, but not for others. School leaders need to

know who is at a disadvantage in their school and determine what can be done to rectify the problem. We need to see each student individually, not as part of a group. Even when overall scores are positive, there may be small groups or individual students who are not successful and engaged in school.

Communicating the Need for Change

Within any school community there are people who do not recognize the need to change the culture of the school so that more students will be engaged. Since the current culture works well for some, there will be stakeholders who need to be educated about those students who are disadvantaged and disengaged. A change-oriented framework will help to communicate the need for change.

The change path model by Cawsey et al. (2016) provides a framework for the change process. Cawsey et al. (2016) have suggested a four-stage model with two to four steps within each stage. The four stages are awakening, mobilization, acceleration, and institutionalization (Cawsey, et al., 2016). Awakening and mobilization provide an actionable tool for beginning organizational change by working within the formal systems and structures of an organization.

The systems and structures of a school are important, but not as important as the people in a school (Cawsey, et al., 2016, p. 376). Rather than looking at systems and structures as the elements of analysis, Grieves (2010) identified people as the main element of analysis. He argued that change strategies need to consider "emergent processes that result more from conflict, flux, and uncertainty than from consensus and stability" (Grieves, 2010, p. 5). Grieves provided an alternative perspective for analyzing change that he calls "creativity and volition: a critical theory of change". From this

perspective, people are active agents in effecting the change process (Grieves, 2010, p. 28). They interpret and implement change directives. The creativity of people in an organization influences the rate, method, and degree of implementation of change. Grieves also looked at other models of change, but did not identify a preferred change model. He suggested that since all models depend on perception, change agents should construct a model based on their own situation.

Cawsey et al. (2016) provided a concrete path for change. Grieves (2010) lacked concreteness, but provided additional factors for consideration in the change process. I recommend a change leader use the change path model (Cawsey et al., 2016) with the sensibilities of critical theory as expressed by Grieves (2010).

The change path model (Cawsey et al., 2016) can be applied to many different organizations, including schools. The steps are clear and actionable. Each step can take a different length of time, so it is not a completely rigid process. In the case of a school, some steps may need to be revisited as circumstances change. As Cawsey et al. (2016) stated, the change process is ongoing, so the entire model can be repeated as new changes are required (p. 376).

Grieves (2010) recognized that change recipients are active agents in change (p. 368). Change recipients in a school may include students, parents, teachers, support staff, administrators, and community. All of these people interpret and modify the change. Cawsey et al. (2016) saw change recipients as having a role limited to active resistance, passivity, or active support (p. 29). When recipients resist change (Cawsey et al. 2016, p. 30), this provides both a problem and an opportunity for the change leader to modify the change process. For Grieves (2010), resistance is about power (p. 368). The change agent

may hold power that others do not and he or she may be the cause of the resistance. It is important to consider whom the change serves. When power is shared between members in an organization, the change process will also be shared. Cawsey et al. (2016) did look at consensus building, which is a valuable part of the change process.

In the awakening stage, change leaders address the recognition of the need for change within the school. Communication about engagement for all students with a diverse group of stakeholders, including those without power, is necessary. Both formal and informal conversations must include parents, community members, teachers, administrators, and students.

It is important to determine who sees a need for change and who does not. The results of past surveys should be widely shared. Once anecdotal evidence (from conversations and observations) and data (from surveys) has been acquired, a conversation can be started about the gap between how the school is functioning and our ideal. All stakeholders need to become aware that the school is not engaging for all students, only for some. It is important to keep the conversation positive. A change leader would need to focus the conversations on a hopeful, inclusive vision of how the school could be.

The data analysis would demonstrate disparities between groups of students. Overall, the school may have excellent scores on achievement tests and surveys, but, there is always variability in student outcomes. As Bryk (2015) explained, the system works well for some, but not for others. There is a chasm between high and low achievers (Bryk, 2015). School leaders need to recognize and alert others that some students are at a disadvantage in their school and something needs to be done to solve the problem.

During the mobilization stage, both formal and informal systems connect influential and marginalized members of our school community. Student representatives, parents from all programs, various teachers, support staff and administrators collaborate to examine the obstacles and supports for increasing engagement for disengaged students. Traditional methods of communication such as newsletters, assemblies and announcements will be augmented by the use of social media and small group discussions both inside and outside the school. We will leverage the creativity of group members, in addition to the "personality, knowledge, skills, and abilities, and related assets" (Cawsey et al., 2016, p.376) of our community in order to create a shared change vision. Not only are there students in our school who have not realized their potential, there are also adults in our school community who have talents to offer to make our school more engaging. By expanding the view of who can offer valuable contributions to the school community, the school culture could be changed to engage disinterested students.

The school community celebrates traditional values such as academics, athletics, and the arts. However, the increasing diversity in the school suggests that the school culture needs to undergo change in order to reflect the diversity in student's lives and thereby engage a wider group of students. Chapter 2 begins a plan for school leaders to engage the school community in the process of cultural change.

Chapter 2: Planning and Development

Framework for Leading the Change Process

Educational leaders beliefs and assumptions about the purpose of education and the roles of teachers and students will impact their beliefs about student engagement (Vibert & Shields, 2003) in both teacher-led curricular and extracurricular activities. How can formal leaders (including principals and vice principals) and informal school leaders (such as influential teachers) provide opportunities for greater engagement in the learning process for all students by changing school culture?

Type of Organizational Change

This OIP calls for radical cultural change in an Alberta junior high school. In order to engage and empower marginalized students, the school community will require a change of perspective.

Radical change. Radical change involves revolutionary change that could be considered innovative (Cawsey et al., 2016). Many schools have a group of highly engaged students as well as a group of disengaged or unengaged students. Results from a survey taken in an Alberta school in 2013 showed that only 54% of students were engaged in school (Learning Bar, 2016). Those results are similar to findings from a 2014 Gallup survey completed in the United States with students from Grades 5 to 12 which found that only 53% of students surveyed were engaged in school (Gallup, 2014). Generally, school communities work toward engaging most students. This Organizational Improvement Plan (OIP) proposes that a much higher percentage of students can become engaged and that school communities should work toward engaging all students.

Changing the perspective of community members to believe that all students can be engaged will require repositioning the whole organization (Cawsey et al., 2016) to accommodate the interests and needs of disengaged students. This change will also require a power shift away from those students who regularly have their needs met, toward disengaged students who have not, historically, had their needs met. For example, Alberta schools have recently welcomed many immigrant children who are not participating in sports or fine arts programs. Some investigation will be necessary to determine what types of programming will engage these students. A shift such as this is a radical change.

Cultural change. Culture includes everything an organization has learned since it began (Culture University.com, 2014). Some school communities have learned how to be academically successful, as measured by outcomes on standardized tests. There are observable strategies in place that lead to good to excellent overall scores on PATs.

Some parts of a school culture will help with the change toward creating an engaging culture for all students and other parts will hinder the change. Cultural factors such as the values of hard work and striving for excellence will be helpful in this change process. However, the underlying assumptions about the role of students and what constitutes student success will be difficult to change. For example, many conservative minded teachers believe that students are receptors of knowledge rather than co-producers of knowledge. Significant data and evidence will be necessary to jolt school employees into accepting the need for cultural change (Schein, 2010). The change this OIP proposes may cause some long-time members of the school community to feel threatened. Those who identify strongly with the history of the school may fear that

change will compromise the school's ability to achieve high academic scores or that it will damage the school's image (Schein, 2010).

A cultural quality of self-preservation leads some members of the school community to deny the need for change. By this I mean that the school's past success on achievement tests and compliant student behavior lead some parents and teachers to conclude that change is not necessary in the school, despite repeated student reports of disengagement.

Reactive change. Managers plan proactive change in anticipation of events. Reactive change results from managers' reactions to external shifts (Cawsey et al., 2016). The need for change in the school already exists; many students are already disengaged. Therefore, the change proposed in this OIP is reactive rather than proactive.

A considerable portion of the student population is not engaged with school. Results from past surveys indicated that many students entered junior high school in Grade 7 feeling excited about school but finished in Grade 9 generally feeling disengaged with school (Learning Bar, 2016). School staff members may blame poor survey results on a particularly disengaged group of Grade 9 students. However, February 2016 results indicated that students were less interested in school when they left junior high school than when they arrived (Learning Bar, 2016). Conventional wisdom may say that Grade 9 students are naturally less engaged than Grade 7 students, but I do not believe that it must be this way. I believe that it is possible for junior high school students to participate in an engaging education that stimulates them to be more excited about learning when they enter high school than they were when the entered junior high school.

Continuous change. Discontinuous change is dramatic and jolts organizations out of significant inertia (Cawsey et al., 2016). Continuous change is recognized as evolving, gradual or cumulative change. This change plan does not fit so neatly on the continuous to discontinuous dimension, because the proposed change includes components of both continuous and discontinuous change. This OIP proposes a dramatic change that will jolt a school out of the status quo, but will require both continuous and cumulative changes in order to be effective. The changes proposed suggest a dramatic change to the school culture that will take a group effort to sustain. This plan promotes increasing the participation of marginalized groups in the school community, which will be a significant change to school culture. In order to maintain representative participation by a variety of groups in the school community, change leaders need to continually be aware of the demographics of a changing community. The change proposed here is both continuous and radical (Carter, Self, Bandow, Wheatley, Thompson, Wright, & Li, 2014).

Carter et al. (2014) suggested that middle leaders (such as principals) are in a unique position to enact change because they can impact change in both the unit (school) and individual workers (teachers and school staff). Therefore, school principals could have the capacity to both challenge the status quo and inspire staff to continuous improvement. Large-scale change often requires staff members to commit to long-term adaptations (Carter et al., 2014, p. 49), so it is realistic to anticipate that radical change may include some continuous change components.

In fact, research by Yang (2014) has demonstrated that school development requires varied levels of constant transformation. Yang's study involved a team of more

than 20 people researching school improvement initiatives in two schools in China over a three-year period. The researchers recognized that a school goes through different rates of change during a single change initiative (Yang, 2014). Successful school leaders used a variety of strategies depending on the stage of the change process. In the context of this OIP, the change leader supports quick implementation of change strategies early in the plan, but later may release pressure to let the speed of progress move more naturally. In other words, school principals need to adapt their leadership strategies as required during the implementation of the change plan because the change will likely evolve differently during different stages of the change process.

Termeer, Dewulf, & Biesbroek (2016) argue that continuous transformational change is possible. The authors contend that there is not necessarily a dichotomy between radical and incremental change. They suggest, and I agree, that perhaps radical changes should not be quick. A radical change may take time to implement. As well, incremental change may be dramatic (Termeer et al., 2016). That is, a change that requires several stages could still be disruptive for the change community. The changes proposed in this OIP are radical and should be continually worked on over an extended period of time.

Leadership Framework

In working through a change process, the four frames suggested by Bolman and Deal (2013) aid leaders in viewing a single situation in four distinct ways. Leaders can misunderstand conditions in organizations, but looking at a scenario through a different frame can provide a new perspective and possibly a new method for handling difficulties. In Chapter 1, I explained how each of the four frames illuminated different considerations within my problem of practice. Each frame has something helpful to offer, but the

political frame is particularly useful in identifying the problem at the root of disengagement in this junior high school.

When looking through the political frame at the problem of disengagement of some students, a change leader can recognize a key issue that could be improved through an OIP. Diverse groups within the school community compete for scarce resources. Those groups of parents and teachers who have experienced success and have improved the image of the school (e.g., in activities such as athletics and the arts) are more likely to have their needs met in future endeavors. However, groups who do not yet improve the profile of the school will not likely enjoy a similar level of influence. Within the political frame, we see that diverse efforts lead to some groups being favored and others being marginalized. Some students are engaged while others are not.

Looking through the political frame leads to the revelation that a school community would be better served by working toward a coherent school goal rather than toward diverse goals. The coherence framework (Fullan & Quinn, 2016) provides the leadership framework necessary to guide the diverse groups in a school community to work together to increase engagement for all students.

Fullan and Quinn's (2016) coherence framework is a useful leadership framework for leading the organizational change process. It includes four key components to guide change: focusing direction, cultivating collaborative cultures, deepening learning, and securing accountability. The change process begins with a clear, shared vision so that everyone has the same understanding of both the goal and the path toward the goal. Cultivating collaborative cultures is part of the framework and also an important aspect of the solution to this plan's problem of practice. As Hargreaves, Boyle and Harris (2015)

noted, "the ends and means are inseparable" (p. 44). In other words, the method an organization uses to correct a problem is part of the solution. In this OIP, a collaborative group will create a collaborative solution. The collaborative group is also a community of learners who are deepening their learning. A shift in learning to create change requires everyone to be building knowledge – all students, staff, and teachers. When everyone is building knowledge, the capacity for everyone to be a problem solver increases (Fullan & Quinn, 2016, p. 80). Also within the coherence framework (Fullan & Quinn, 2016), the collaborative culture needs to secure accountability. Members of the school community will take responsibility for problem solving when they feel that they belong to a collaborative group that is working toward learning improvement (Fullan & Quinn, 2016, p.111). Internal accountability can be reinforced with external accountability measures such as monitoring and selective interventions (Fullan & Quinn, 2016, p.109). The coherence framework (Fullan & Quinn, 2016) provides additional and helpful structure to this OIP.

To begin any change process, Fullan and Quinn (2016) have argued that all members of the organization must have a clear understanding of the problem that needs to be solved. The gap between performance and expectations in our school must first be addressed in an organizational analysis.

Critical Organizational Analysis

Change leaders need to analyze what is happening in and around an organization and to determine specifically what needs to be changed. Nadler and Tushman (1989) developed an organizational model that divides an organization into smaller components for a more effective analysis. The authors segment the overall workings of an

organization into three general parts: inputs, organization and outputs (Nadler & Tushman, 1989). Before changes can be mobilized, the change agent needs a clear understanding of the organization's complexities, including the inputs from outside the organization, the transformation process within the organization, and the outputs that the organization issues back to the community (Nadler & Tushman, 1989). In this open systems approach, Nadler and Tushman recognize the interrelatedness of all the components.

Inputs

The inputs of an organization, according to Nadler and Tushman (1989), include its environment, resources, and history. It is very important for a change agent to have a firm understanding of these factors. The environment of the school can best be understood through a PESTE analysis (Cawsey et al., 2016, p. 38) as explained in Chapter 1. The economic resources for a school include money allocated by the school district. The province provides money to the school district and the school district administration then determines how that money is divided within the district. The amount of money available is largely outside the control of school administration. In addition, the history of the school should be considered. Many traditional schools have a history of hard work and academic achievement as identified in Chapter 1. These inputs are important to understand, but not malleable as are the organizational factors.

Organization

Nadler and Tushman (1989) recognized the factors within the organization as work, people, informal structure and process, and formal structure. All of these components must be consistently working in order for the school to be running at its peak

effectiveness. Each can be analyzed individually to recognize gaps between how the organization is functioning and "the desired future state" (Nadler & Tushman, 1989, p. 198).

In some schools, there is a gap between the current organizational state and the vision for this OIP. The ideal state for a school is that all students have an opportunity to be successful. Many students are academically successful, but there are also students who do not feel a sense of belonging and engagement with school. Members of some school communities are in denial about this gap. This problem can be analyzed in terms of work, people, informal structure and process, and formal structure (Nadler & Tushman, 1989, p. 195).

Work. The work we do in schools involves teaching and learning. The purpose of education has traditionally been to pass on knowledge from the knowledgeable to their students (Prentice & Houston, 1977). This approach assumes either that students are not knowledgeable or that the knowledge they have is deficient. Schools are intended to serve society's need to develop citizens who contribute socially and economically to the greater good (Prentice & Houston, 1977). Preparing students for employment is a significant goal for conservatives (Gutek, 1997). One prevailing belief in Alberta schools is that students need to learn the information that is going to help them to be successful contributors to society. Therefore, the work of teachers is seen as helping students learn the content they need to learn so that they can become successful employees (or workers) and good citizens.

However, if the work of schools were perceived from a liberal view, the experience would be much different. A liberal education introduces students to a wide

range of educational experiences, so that they can discover what is most engaging for them. Within a broad, liberal education students discover topics that engage them (Dearborn, 2013). From a liberal point of view, the work of teachers is to introduce students to this wide range of educational experiences, so that students can discover what is most engaging for them (Raven, 2005).

According to Raven (2005), liberal education nurtures diversity. All groups (e.g., racial, ability, religious) are considered and consulted in determining the curriculum of liberal education. School leaders and students consider a variety of viewpoints, which allows students to discover a point of view that resonates with their own experience. This is much more engaging than being presented with a single view. Students can be engaged in an education that reflects their lived experiences as has been demonstrated by educator Paulo Freire (1971, 1998).

Freire was a Brazilian educator who worked in the 1950s and 1960s to teach illiterate farm laborers to read and write. His philosophy of "liberating education" (Freire, 1971, p. 67) was intended to free people from oppression by giving them the opportunity to fully participate in their world. In this type of education, knowledge is not passed on from the teacher, but is gradually unveiled through actions of the teacher and student. Students are engaged because they recognize how their education fits with their lives. The work of the teacher, then, is to help students become able to participate fully in society, not just as workers, but also as critical thinkers and people of influence.

People. There are many groups and subgroups in a school community. The main groups include students, parents, community members, and staff. Alberta has a diverse student population and it is becoming more diverse. One aspect of that diversity is ethnic

diversity. Alberta has had an increase in immigrant students. Statistics Canada (2016) reports that the number of immigrants settling in Alberta has been increasing since 2006 and is projected to continue to rise for the next 15 years. Immigrant students and their parents will likely face barriers such as a lack of English language skills and a lack of familiarity with the education system (Wong, 2015). Schools will need to take special care to engage an increasingly diverse community.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, diversity has many facets, including "race, religious beliefs, colour, gender, gender identity, gender expression, physical disability, mental disability, age, ancestry, place of origin, marital status, source of income, family status or sexual orientation" (Alberta Human Rights Act, 2015, p.2). There is extensive diversity in the student population, including ranges in every criterion mentioned in the Alberta Human Rights Act. However, there is sometimes very little diversity in the staff.

The school staff members may be primarily white, Christian, able-bodied, heterosexual, married and middle class. If staff members do not represent the diversity of the student population, we must ensure that the voices of all students are heard. Students may choose to communicate in ways that we are not accustomed to listening to, including through the use of social media. Because of the differences between students and staff, school leadership also needs to listen to all of the adults who have a relationship with students. The adults who are most aware of the views of students may be their parents, but could be other people. Secretaries, caretakers, learning assistants, and librarians are examples of people who may have insight into the needs of students. Throughout the change process it is important to be cognizant of who is listening to students and who is able to voice student concerns when students will not or cannot speak for themselves.

Informal structure and process (culture). In order to understand a group or the actions of people within a group, leaders need to understand the group culture. Change agents become analysts of the culture, which involves "hidden and complex aspects of life in groups" (Schein, 2010, p.9). Culture is impacted by the founders of the group and is then formed by the shared history. The schools I have worked in have been public schools founded by a relatively homogeneous group of Christian men of Western European ancestry. These schools have enjoyed a reputation of high academic achievement, conservatism, high moral standards for behavior, and success in athletics and the arts. Many school staff members refer to these examples of success as reason to reject the idea of change in the schools.

Schein (2010) identified that when external conditions change, people within an organization are reluctant to change. Demographics in the school and community are changing, but standards for success and strategies for achieving success have changed very little. In some schools, it is evident that many staff members would like to continue with the status quo because they feel it is working.

Duffy's (2003) concept of mental models explains that educators' assumptions influence how they enact their work. These understandings are often left unquestioned, and educators continue to hold them for a long time. Unquestioned assumptions may create dysfunctional, incomplete, or inaccurate mental models (Duffy, 2003). Mental models need to be interrogated through conversations that will encourage educators to reevaluate their own thinking regarding how schooling should be enacted.

It is important to pay attention to those who are resistant to change, because their reasons for hesitation can provide insight into weaknesses in the proposed change or in

the change process (Cawsey et al., 2016; Duffy, 2003). Meaningful conversation can reveal the assumptions of both change leaders and change resistors. Inquiry into the reasons that people are resistant to change can help leaders to develop a change plan that is most suitable to the needs of the organization (Cawsey et al., 2016, p. 225). For example, resistant teachers may feel unprepared for change. In this case, change leaders need to include training and further education as part of the change process. If resistant teachers reveal that they believe the change will not be beneficial or will have negative consequences, change leaders should have further discussions about this perception of the change process. Perhaps a lack of information or misinformation has resulted in negative views of the change. Either way, a clearer message about the organization's problems, needs, or vision may be necessary (Cawsey et al., 2016, p. 225). This is not to say that the change process should be halted or even slowed to wait until all people involved are in agreement with the change, since consensus is not likely to happen. However, resistance should not be ignored. There is a need to proceed through the change process with continued awareness for legitimate concerns.

During a cultural change, the change possibilities can be broadened when all members of the culture are able to voice their concerns (Le Fevre, Robinson, & Sinnema, 2014). Change leaders should engage in genuine inquiry to better understand the organization and the perceptions of the people involved in the change process. With genuine inquiry, leaders are open-minded during discussions and while asking questions. Asking genuine, open-ended questions rather than leading questions demonstrates a willingness to rethink the best possible change path for the organization. Le Fevre et al. (2014) found that school leaders who espouse genuine inquiry and continually challenge

their own assumptions make decisions that are responsive to the concerns of others (p. 896). When a wide variety of needs are considered, a more comprehensive solution is possible.

Considering the needs of all requires everyone to be engaged in learning new strategies to meet the needs of a changing school culture. Part of the change strategy should be building capacity in all staff. Fullan and Quinn (2016) explained that in order for meaningful change to occur in education, everyone involved must be engaged in "knowledge building" (p. 79). As a result of this engagement, everyone in the organization becomes a learner. This communal learning needs to be focused on the change vision and have clear goals. Since the change process requires the establishment of new ways of operating, it is important to make sure that there are many people who are competent in the new ways. The skills of all students, teachers, parents and school leaders should be developed. Everyone comes to an understanding and everyone has the potential to become a learner. In the case of this OIP, everyone becomes an expert on how to engage and empower students by reflecting students' lived experiences in their education. Student engagement is achieved when students are actively involved in their education. Teachers in the school learn to explore issues that connect the prescribed curriculum to social, economic and political realities in the students' lives. School based administrators and teachers learn to create conditions in which students can become active participants in their own education (McMahon, 2003).

Leaders channel the positive energy of those who adapt to the cultural change process and have positive results (Cawsey et al., 2016, p. 223). Change leaders continuously celebrate increased engagement and support innovation. Positive coworkers

can influence reluctant or unsure staff members to adopt progressive strategies in the change process. For example, when diverse members of the school community attend school meetings or other functions, the success should be celebrated with comments and photos in various forms of media. This is one way in which leaders can build momentum to support change (Cawsey et al., 2016, p. 202). As well, teachers who engage community partners to enhance curricular goals should be recognized and celebrated. A successful change leader recognizes the accomplishments of staff and supports people in using their talents for the benefit of the school. In this case, the school will benefit when more students are moved to participate in and engage with their schooling.

Formal structure. The formal structure of a school involves a traditional organizational structure (Bolman & Deal, 2013). District office leaders, including superintendents and school board members, oversee the school administration, which oversees the teaching staff and support staff. The support staff includes educational assistants, library staff, and administrative assistants. The school organizational structure is very similar to Mintzberg's model (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 75). There is a hierarchy that places superintendents and school boards at the top, principals and vice principals at the middle line and teachers at the operating core. Support staff, parents, and community members all provide support to the school operations, but have very little influence in decision-making. Students are not included in this model, but all of the workers in the formal structure are aware that they are working toward improving the conditions and optimizing the chances of success for students.

The gap to be addressed in the formal organizational structure is that students and parents are not always recognized as part of this structure. The formal structure impacts

the way organizations organize their work. If a school organizes work without considering the role of parents and students in that work then those groups are not employed to their full potential. In fact, parents may be seen as obstructions to the work of schooling rather than the partners they could be. As well, students may be seen as part of the work in the organization rather than members of the formal structure.

All of those who belong to the formal structure of the school organization have tasks associated or assigned to them (Cawsey et al., 2016). When we recognize parents and students as associates in the formal structure of schooling, they are assigned meaningful tasks. Parents can be recognized as partners in the education of their children. Students can be recognized as having partial responsibility for and influence over their own learning. In Chapter 3 a new organizational plan, that includes parents and students, is outlined.

Outputs

The outputs for an educational institution are not the same as those for a business (Cawsey et al., 2016). For a business, the outputs are the services and products it provides or the customer satisfaction it derives. However, Nadler & Tushman's (1989) congruence model works nicely for an educational organization because the model also considers alternative outputs. The outputs to be considered in a school would include: (a) the degree to which the school meets its mission-related goals; (b) the growth and development of the school; and (c) the satisfaction of organization members.

The quality of outputs created by the school described in Chapter 1 is not equal to the quality of outputs suggested by this OIP. First, the mission statement suggests a commitment to providing the highest quality education to students, yet there is

disagreement within the school about what constitutes the highest quality education. Some teachers have conservative views while others have liberal views, as I have explained previously. Second, the growth and development of the school have not progressed significantly. The school is very traditional and strategies have not changed much in the past 50 years. Third, the satisfaction of students in the school is varied. Some find their education to be engaging while others do not. There are significant gaps in the quality of the outputs created compared to what we could be attained.

There are successful groups and marginalized groups in all schools (Bryk, 2015). Representative members of all groups must be included in finding a solution to the problem of disengaged students. Increased engagement of marginalized students would benefit the entire school. The engagement gap between the privileged and the "less able, less powerful, less 'mainstream', less wealthy, and less male students" (Marshall, 2004, p. 9) will be addressed in the solutions section below.

Possible Solutions

Surveys in Alberta (Learning Bar, Inc. 2016) and elsewhere (Gallup Poll, 2014) have shown that nearly half of students in junior high school are not engaged in school. I believe that it would be possible to have a much higher percentage of students engaged if school culture reflected the lived experiences of all students (Freire, 1971, 1998), not just some students (Bryk, 2015). This OIP seeks to identify how formal and informal school leaders can change the school culture in order to engage more students in the learning process. There are three possible solutions to this problem: (a) maintain the status quo; (b) implement the changes to areas of weakness identified in the equity audit; or (c) derive a community solution.

Status Quo

One possible solution is to maintain the status quo. This solution would be acceptable to those members of the school community who do not yet recognize the need for change. Students who are already engaged can maintain their level of engagement. Those who are not engaged may not respond to efforts by the school community to engage with them, regardless of the quality of the plan. Perhaps efforts to change the school for the benefit of students who may never engage with school are ill advised.

The priority within this strategy is to keep the students who are currently engaged involved with the school. There is a possibility that a change plan could have unintended results and, in this case, the results could be that students who were previously engaged with school may not engage with the new culture. By keeping the status quo, the students who have historically been successful and engaged with school will continue to be successful and engaged. With the status quo, the school would continue to score well on PATs, but students who do not feel engaged with our school would continue to be marginalized.

This strategy would require no cultural change, which would keep many of the school community satisfied. Those who do not see a need for change would not have to endure change. No additional resources would be required because no organizational strategies would have changed.

However, the student population in Alberta schools is continually changing, and is becoming increasingly diverse. If the school continues to stay the same, despite the changing student population, I believe that the rates of disengaged students will increase. With increased numbers of disengaged students will come decreased academic

achievement, increased student absenteeism, and problems with student behavior (Fredricks et al., 2004). For these reasons, the status quo is not a viable option.

Equity Audit and Change

Another possible solution is to implement the changes that are demonstrated in the weaknesses of the Equity Continuum (Murray & West-Burns, 2011) as explained in Chapter 1. This audit examines seven areas for equity: (a) classroom climate and instruction; (b) school climate; (c) student voice and space; (d) family/caregiver-school relations; (e) school leadership; (f) community connections; and (g) professional development (Murray & West-Burns, 2011). A school principal could complete the audit and then inform school staff members of the changes that need to be made. The indicators of equity measured in the audit are compatible with the tenets of authentic leadership including sensitivity to others, promoting ethical principles, and the ability to build relationships (Begley, 2006; Gardner, Cogliser, Davis & Dickens, 2011). Therefore, a principal who espouses the traits of an authentic leader would likely be comfortable with the equity audit (Murray & West-Burns, 2012).

Resources would be required to implement changes needed to have a school comply with the equity audit. For example, training for teachers could be helpful in areas related to accommodating diversity in the student population. As well, the school may purchase materials such as posters, books, and videos that reflect student and community diversity. Time could be allocated for staff members to better connect with parents and community members. Clearly, this option requires resource allocation, but the outcome would reflect a more diverse understanding of our school community.

Compared to the status quo, this option is beneficial. The diversity of the student body would be recognizable in school displays and gatherings. Staff members would have a better understanding of the diverse needs in the community. Students would be more likely to recognize their lived experiences reflected in the schooling experience, likely leading to increased student engagement.

However, Yang (2014) explained that the change vision must belong to the school community, not only to the principal. The equity audit solution comes from the administration and a single document. It is unlikely that most staff members would be accepting of a solution that is thrust upon them in such a way. Many would reject a solution that they have not had a chance to contribute to before implementation had begun. Even if staff members agreed that the vision for the school should include increased diversity, they should be allowed to have input into the change strategies. The school community members will enact the vision according to their perception of the need and their understanding of the school's "personality" (Yang, 2014, p. 284). In other words, school staff members have an intimate knowledge of their school culture and will move toward changes according to their understanding. Therefore, changes to school culture need to be considerate of the opinions and views of the members of the school staff.

Community Solution

A third possible approach is to have the school community derive a solution. A leader could pull together a collaborative task team (Fullan & Quinn, 2016) to coordinate the change process. Fullan and Quinn (2016) asserted that "what pulls people in is meaningful work in collaboration with others" (p. 47). The process of creating a

collaborative team that includes members of diverse orientations partially fulfills the goal of engaging more people in the school community. The professionals working in schools should represent the same cultural diversity as the students and parents (Marshall, 2004), so the collaborative team should be representative of the student population. The administrators of the school initiate the process of creating a change team and encourage parents and various community members to be involved, but ultimately those who are interested in belonging to a diverse change team would constitute the group.

The broad vision for the change is to engage disengaged students by reflecting their lived experiences in the school. In discussion, the change team decides specifically what this means in the school. They analyze the various groups, of which, ideally, there are representatives on the change team. Led by the research on engagement and data from school surveys shared with them by the change leaders, the change team determines a more detailed and specific vision for engaging disengaged students in their particular context.

The equity audit (Murray & West-Burns, 2011) may also be part of this solution. The change leader can introduce the change team to the benefits and perspectives of the audit and the collaborative team could choose to use it as a tool to identify changes that they would like to make in the school environment. The difference between this approach and the one described above is that the collaborative change team is choosing to complete the audit rather than the administration making the choice.

Resources needed for this strategy include time, money, and information. Time is needed for various members of the change team to have meaningful conversations with each other and with stakeholders in the school community. Some of this may be take

place during professional development days, but meetings may also need to be held during evenings to accommodate others who work during the day. Scheduled school events such as meet the teacher evenings, parent-teacher conference nights and open house events can be leveraged to discuss the change process with parents and students. Funding for this project is required to purchase the same types of materials to reflect the school diversity as were mentioned in the equity audit. Posters, book, videos or other materials purchased should reflect the students and their interests. Again, as the previous equity audit solution suggested, people in the school community, and particularly on the change team may need supports such as training to understand and accommodate diverse student needs. This option is costly in terms of resources, but will ultimately best meet the needs of the school community, particularly of disengaged students.

The benefits of the collaborative change team solution include acceptance, suitability, and sustainability. The collaborative option leads to the most agreeable solution because it is the most likely solution to gain buy in from the community. A change strategy is more likely to gain the acceptance of stakeholders when they have contributed to the solution (Cawsey et al., 2016). As well, this solution is most likely to generate ideas that fit each particular context. The change team particularly focuses on the needs of the community it serves and will thereby choose change strategies most suitable for the unique characteristics of that community. Finally, this is the most sustainable solution of the three options. Since there are many members of the collaborative change team to take on leadership roles, it is more likely that the strategy will continue if circumstances or personnel change (Hargreaves, 2007). Clearly, the community solution is the superior solution to the school problem of disengaged students.

Leadership Approaches to Change

The principal leads the representative collaborative change team that this OIP proposes. The principal, by nature of the position, has a formal leadership role. However, leading a diverse group through a radical change process will require more than a position of authority.

Cawsey et al. (2016) claimed that change leaders need to be able to negotiate several paradoxical situations. To negotiate change, the leader needs to focus on both the vision and the change process. As well, the leader must get the change started and keep it moving. Leaders have to be able to work with people who are engaged with the change process as well as with resisters. Part of this ability to work with people during change includes having a good understanding of when to push forward and when to be patient with both people and the process. In addition, it is very important for change leaders to be able to negotiate relationships with diverse people.

Leader-Member Exchange

Currently, the leaders in some Alberta schools employ strategies of the Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) approach (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995, Northouse, 2013). LMX is based on the relationships between members of an organization, particularly (but not limited to) the relationships between superiors and subordinates in a workplace (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). LMX strategies can facilitate excellent relationships between the school leaders and the community of diverse people. However, when relationships are in the early stages of LMX, the quality of interactions is contingent on mutual dependencies; the relationship is enhanced when both parties can assist the other in some way (Graen & Uhl-Bien, p. 234). In the case of this plan, the marginalized groups may not be able to

offer much to the leaders in exchange for consideration in the change process. The principal needs to be willing to offer approval, trust, and support to groups who may not be able to provide any value to the leader's self interest (Graen & Uhl-Bien, p. 234). In the case of this plan, the LMX relationship will not likely progress to the partner relationship required for the collaborative team to thrive. A leadership approach in which the leader helps to develop the personal growth of followers would work best for this OIP.

Transformational Leadership

Initially, it seemed to me that a transformational leader would be best able to guide this change process. A transformational leader has a compelling vision that inspires others to work toward change (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000). The charisma of a transformational leader also encourages people to join the cause. A transformational leader recognizes the strength of each contributor and allows each person to share those strengths for the betterment of the school (Sun & Leithwood, 2012). Yang (2014) showed that all staff members have different strengths and needs that could be supported differently at various times during the change process by a transformational leader. Transformational leadership fosters capacity development and commitment of followers, which are necessary for school reform initiatives (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Sun & Leithwood, 2012).

Transformational leadership seems to be a compelling strategy, but it will not be effective in this particular process. The primary reason is that the vision must belong to the people (Yang, 2014) in order for the people to take ownership of it and carry it out. Particularly in this OIP, the collaborative team should feel ownership of the change

vision. However, transformational leaders hold a position of power (Gunter, 2005) in that they initiate the vision and build followership commitment to that vision. In this change plan, management should not wholly control the situation. Transformational leaders are disciplinarians because they do not entertain opposing views about the vision or how the vision should be enacted (Gunter, 2005). In this case, a transformational leader should not control the discourse of change. The change discourse needs to empower followers to create change that is meaningful and relevant to their own situation (Freire, 1971). For these reasons, transformational leadership is inappropriate for this OIP.

Authentic Leadership

The leadership style required must allow the leaders to create positive relationships with followers, have guiding values with an openness to change, and have the moral inclination to lead toward the best interests of all students. With these criteria in mind, authentic leadership seems to be the best leadership approach for this change process.

A leader who has conviction, the ability to build relationships, and the will to empower followers is an authentic leader (George, 2016). First, an authentic leader must have firm self-awareness (George, 2016; Northouse, 2013). The leader of this change plan needs to have a clear sense of his or her own values (Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May & Walumbwa, 2005). In this case, the authentic leader must firmly believe that a school can and should be a place where all students can be successful. Holding this conviction will allow the leader to be true to self while also holding worthy objectives for the school (Gardner et al., 2005). For authentic leaders, consistency between who they are and what

they do is fundamental. Intrapersonal skills are crucial for an authentic leader, but so are interpersonal skills (Northouse, 2013).

Interpersonal skills help an authentic leader to understand the needs of the school community. The leader of this change process requires the ability to engender trust (George, 2016). When the leader approaches the community with openness and honesty, followers reply with a transparency that leads to a more authentic relationship (Gardner et al., 2005). Leaders and followers establish a working relationship that leads them to create of a vision of the school as one that allows all students the opportunity to be engaged. A positive relationship and a positive shared vision allow the collaborative change team to feel comfortable working with the authentic leader to enact change. The authentic leader has a positive impact on school climate by encouraging diverse community members to communicate with each other (Begley, 2006).

During the change process, the authentic leader develops the strengths of followers. As a result, leaders emerge within the follower group (George, 2016). School and community members who possess leadership skills are encouraged to use their skills to advance the change vision. In a collaborative working group, emergent leaders can be empowered to lead others toward positive change. The authentic leader also grows through such a relationship with others in the school community.

A reciprocal relationship in which both the leader and the followers share their understanding of the school community leads to growth for everyone. The leaders and followers will support each other (Gardner et al., 2005). The ideal result is a school community in which all members understand each other and themselves better. This type

of environment the leads students to understanding their schooling and themselves better, which leads to increased engagement (Freire, 1971; McMahon, 2003).

Chapter 3: Implementation, Evaluation, and Communication

Change Implementation Plan

Introduction

This change plan examines the problem of how formal leaders (including principals and vice principals) and informal school leaders (such as influential teachers) can provide opportunities for greater engagement in the learning process for all students by changing the culture (Schein, 2010) of an increasingly diverse Alberta junior high school. As we have seen, many schools are not engaging for students (Fullan & Quinn, 2016). Several recent surveys, including surveys in some Alberta schools (Learning Bar, 2016) and larger surveys in the United States (Gallup, 2014), demonstrate that only 50% to 55% of students in Grades 5 to 9 are engaged with school.

For this Organizational Improvement Plan (OIP), student engagement is defined as "the extent to which students identify with and value schooling outcomes, have a sense of belonging at school, participate in academic and non-academic activities, strive to meet the formal requirements of schooling, and make a serious personal investment in learning" (Willms et al., 2009, p. 7). When students are engaged in school, they become more committed to school (Fredricks et al., 2004) and their academic outcomes improve (Appleton et al., 2008). The following implementation plan is intended to guide the members of an Alberta junior high school community in making changes that will lead to increased student engagement.

Change Strategy

The change strategy of this plan addresses ten aspects of change. They are: (a) goals and priorities; (b) sharing data; (c) communication; (d) focusing direction; (e)

collaborative change team; (f) power structure; (g) managing stakeholder reaction; (h) resources; (i) potential implementation issues; and (j) building momentum.

Goals and priorities. The primary goal of this change plan is to increase student engagement. The school district has identified seven strategic priorities for the 2016-2017 school year. As a reflection of those priorities, a junior high school within the district has established the same seven priorities. One significant priority for both the school and district is to increase student engagement by fostering and developing relationships between students, parents, staff and community. It is clear, then, that this change plan fits perfectly within the context of the organizational strategy.

There are significant goals that must be attained in the lead up to achieving the primary goal, including increasing community collaboration, developing more connections between the students and adults of the school community, and strengthening relationships between students and adults. This change plan supports the strategic priorities for the school and district by explaining a process to achieve the desired goals.

Sharing data. Evidence of the lack of student engagement will be shared with stakeholders. For example, the school and district gather data on student engagement using the Tell Them From Me survey (Learning Bar, 2016), as recommended by Alberta Education, every 1 to 3 years. Usually, the results of the survey are discussed at a staff meeting, posted to the school and district web pages, and not revisited. The data have not yet been used to their potential; in particular the results have not been used to determine areas of strength and weakness and then to determine a plan for improvement. Survey results can reveal useful information such as whether students feel more engaged in classroom activities or in school wide activities. By analyzing specific results, change

leaders can choose strategies for change that relate directly to struggles in their school context.

This change plan proposes that the data be shared with the school community with some explanation of what the numbers mean within that particular school context. For instance, the data can be tracked over a series of years to determine trends. Stakeholders should be made aware of whether student engagement increases, decreases, or is maintained. Results can be shared with parents through the school newsletter, parent-teacher nights, and public meetings. Since parents have a significant impact on students' attitude toward school (Gaydos, 2008; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000), it is important to keep parents informed of school improvement strategies.

The students will be consulted after the survey in order to clarify the results. Past Learning Bar (2016) surveys have indicated that 30% to 55% of students are not engaged in school. Further conversations with students are necessary to clarify and explain the meaning of those results. Because the survey provides limited information about the students' feelings, discussions with students to clarify their perceptions of school and engagement are useful.

Communication. Communication with a diverse group is crucial to this change plan. An important consideration in a communication plan is to determine the message to communicate. A clear message will positively impact how stakeholders accept the change (Cawsey et al., 2016, p. 172). The change leader will begin by making staff members aware that the data from the Tell Them From Me survey (Learning Bar, 2016) indicate that many students in our school are disengaged. Likely, many school employees are aware of the problem of disengagement, but data from the survey will confirm these

hunches. The change leader has to be very clear that changes will be implemented in order to increase student engagement, but that the nature of those changes will be determined by an interested group of stakeholders from the local school community. The changes need to reflect the lived experiences in the local community so that students feel connected to school (McMahon, 2003). For example, literature from a variety of cultural backgrounds that reflect student diversity can be used to teach required outcomes.

Both one-to-one communication and school-wide publicity (Cawsey et al., 2016, p. 202) are useful strategies. At times the change leader needs to meet individually with members of the school community, and at other times town-hall style meetings are necessary. On one hand, individual, less formal conversations with "key influencers" (Cawsey et al., 2016, p. 202) help to educate informal leaders about the need to increase student engagement. On the other hand, community meetings help ensure that a consistent, controlled message is expressed (Cawsey et al., 2016, p. 241). A focused, clear message contributes to increased trust and fewer rumors during the change process.

Kotter and Schlesinger (2008) identified a series of methods for managing resistance: education, participation, facilitation, negotiation, and coercion (p. 130). The least forceful strategy is education, so that is the preferred strategy in this change plan. Education involves communicating what needs to change and why. Leaders use education early in the change process in the hopes that those who agree with the change process will help with implementation (Kotter & Schlesinger, 2008, p. 7). A more detailed communication plan is included later in this chapter. After the school community has been educated about the need for improvement in the area of student engagement, a focused change process can begin.

Focusing direction. The communications and conversations need to remain focused on the gap between the current level of student engagement and the envisioned state of student engagement. Focusing the direction of the communication and change efforts is important to the success of the change plan. Hattie (2015a) points out that there are many topics that can distract educators from initiatives that matter for students. For example, some schools and school districts have as many as seven strategic priorities including the arts, athletics and technology. These are all wonderful priorities for students, but seven priorities may be too many on which to focus. Priorities that have minimal effect on student achievement can take time and resources away from strategies that do impact student achievement (Hattie, 2015a). In order to focus effort on increasing student engagement, the school would be better off with a single priority.

Developing and sustaining focused direction is an important component to any effective change process, according to Fullan and Quinn (2016). The number of people working on a single initiative increases when there are fewer initiatives, because there are fewer distractors in play. The people who begin to work on the single focus need to have a shared understanding so that they shift their energy to the same priority. Many people working together toward a clear goal are more effective in creating change than smaller groups each working toward a different goal.

Collaborative change team. A collaborative change team drives the change process in this plan. Schools have a wide range of strengths among their staff (Hattie, 2015b) and within their school community. A collaborative change team with diverse membership optimizes the ability of community members to share their expertise and improve the schooling experience for students (Hattie, 2015b).

Likely, a school administrator (principal or vice-principal) needs to initiate establishment of the change team. An administrator has the positional power (Cawsey et al., 2016) to make decisions regarding school policy and the influence to encourage others to join the team. Ideally, the leader of this team espouses the qualities of authentic leadership, including well-defined self-knowledge, sensitivity to others, ethical principles, and the ability to build relationships (Begley, 2006; Gardner et al., 2011).

There are different types of power in an organization. The formal leaders have positional power, but they leverage support of people in the school community who have connections to diverse groups of parents and community members. Connection power, or "network power" (Cawsey et al., 2016, p. 187) provides access to information from and influence over diverse groups in the school community. Using influence, the change leader makes connections with both formal and informal leaders in the school community in order to encourage membership on the change team. The change leader assembles a team of informal leaders from various groups of students, parents, and other stakeholders. This representative group becomes the hub of the change process. Therefore, the change team has influence on the change path in a formalized role.

Power structure. Currently, the formal power structure in the school is much like Mintzberg's model (Bolman & Deal, 2013). Mintzberg's model includes the district administrators at the top, or "strategic apex" (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 75). In the middle are the school level administrators and at the very broad bottom are the teachers, in the "operating core." Flanking the school administration are support staff and the members of the technostructure who provide for many needs in the school, but have very little

influence and even less power. This change plan seeks to modify the model of the organizational chart as shown in Figure 1.

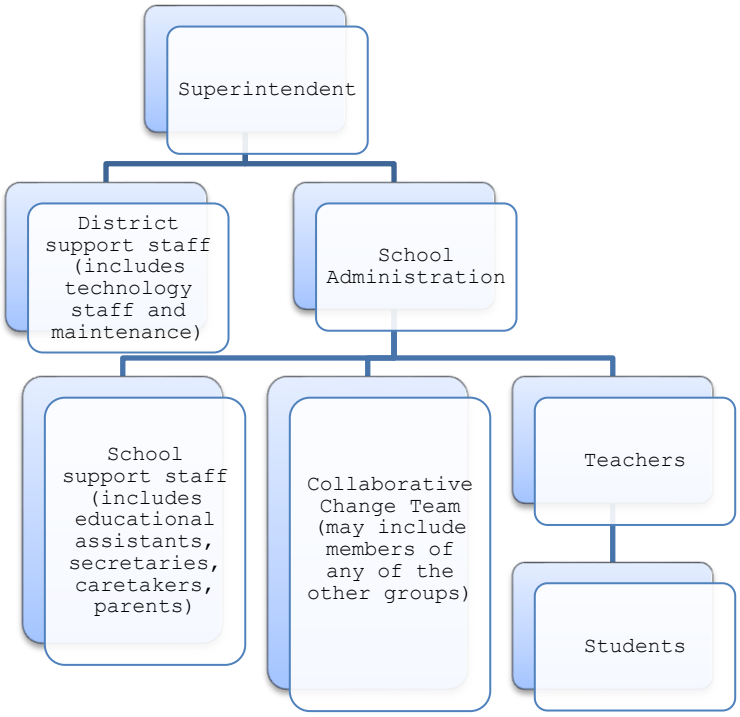

Figure 1. New organizational chart

The new organizational chart includes parents, teachers, students, and community members. The school administration works with and is part of the new change team. In turn, the change team has some influence in school policies. This organizational chart incorporates a group below the principal that includes leaders who are parents, teachers, students, and community members. Students are now included in of the organizational structure since they have become contributors to school decisions. In the context of this OIP, it is important that parents and community members are recognized as part of the organization and have input into the school culture. The new organizational structure supports student engagement because students are collaborating in the creation of their

educational experiences (Harris, 2010) and they can see the relationships between their community and their schooling (Vibert & Shields, 2003).

Managing stakeholder reaction. At this point in the plan, there is a diverse collaborative change team whose members agree that there are too many students disengaged with school and that the situation can be improved. Since the members of the change team come from different backgrounds it is unlikely that they will have complete agreement on how to change the school culture. More likely, they will have a variety of reactions to the change plan.

Change leaders must lead resistors as well as collaborators. Conflict during the change process should not be ignored because it can provide an opportunity to look more critically at the change plan. Those who are challenging the change process can instill creativity in the change process (Grieves, 2010, p. 28) by providing an alternative perspective. Challengers may have valid concerns that could lead to improvements in the nature of the change. With this in mind, the change leader would be wise to speak directly to resistors (Gaubatz & Ensminger, 2017, p. 159) so that the messages between the resistor and the leader are clearer and the chances of misunderstandings are reduced. If there is a lack of trust in the relationship, direct and quick communication can clarify miscommunication and help to build trust relationships (Kotter & Schlesinger, 2008). Two-way communication with resistors is particularly important. They may have valid concerns that need to be addressed in the change plan or they may need further education about the change.

Some resistors may not have a clear understanding of why the change is necessary. Further education will be helpful for those people who either do not see the

need for change or do not feel ready for the change. If resistance is based on inadequate or inaccurate information, then change leaders need to provide additional accurate information. If resistance is based on feelings of unpreparedness, then change leaders need to provide professional development and training to help all stakeholders to feel prepared (Gaubatz & Ensminger, 2017; Kotter & Schlesinger, 2008). In the case of this change plan, training in cross-cultural relationships, inclusion, or areas of particular interest to students may be required. Resistors may be able to identify the areas in which they require further training, or change leaders may identify deficiencies in education.

Allowing resistors to make their voices heard is important to countering resistance. Involving all stakeholders in decision-making helps to curb resistance (Gaubatz & Ensminger, 2017; Kotter & Schlesinger, 2008). In the case of this change plan, it would be wise to allow those involved in the change to decide how they participate. For example, teachers can look at the results of the equity audit (Murray & West-Burns, 2011) and determine in which category they would like to begin to make changes. Teachers are expected to make changes, but they can expect some autonomy in how and at what rate they change.

All in all, change leaders need to show patience with some of the stakeholders. Not everyone complies with change at the same rate (Gaubatz & Ensminger, 2017), even among those who agree with the need for change.

Resources. In order to successfully implement this change plan, some resources, including time, money, and human resources need to be allocated to the project. Dedicated time is important to ensure that the change plan is properly supported. School districts typically have monthly professional development days for teachers which

sometimes include support staff. This plan encourages the practice of support staff attending the morning portion of professional development days and this time is spent working as a school team to determine how best to engage a diverse group of students. Co-learning promotes a shared understanding of the vision and supports collaboration (Fullan & Quinn, 2016). School-based community meetings could be held in the evenings. Evening meetings accommodate parents and community members who work during the day. The members of the change team require time to meet frequently early in the process, but less often as the project is implemented. Regular meetings allow people to plan ahead to attend and keep up the momentum.

Informal time could also be arranged for staff and community members to communicate. For example, teachers providing before and after school supervision could be encouraged to visit with parents and students as they are arriving and leaving the school. These informal conversations can serve to create connections between various adults in the students' lives.

Within the school day, teachers may be provided with release time to visit classrooms of other teachers who have implemented innovative strategies. School administration may facilitate teacher collaboration during the day for teachers to share helpful strategies. Fullan and Quinn (2016) asserted that "what pulls people in is meaningful work in collaboration with others" (p. 47). Meaningful collaboration is the kind of work that this change plan is intended to inspire.

Money is an important resource, but it may be unwise to reallocate a large portion of the budget from other expenditures. However, by decreasing the number of school priorities to one, there may be additional funds available. Money may be used to bring in

guest speakers or facilitators who can support staff members in the change plan. Ideally, local people could support the project by speaking to the school staff or providing workshops and then following up with classroom visits. Local people are more in touch with the local context and needs of particular students. They would also be less expensive because schools would not need to pay travel and accommodation expenses.

Human resources are most important to this change plan because the plan is based on relationships. It is vital for the change team to ask students who they see as the important people in the community and find ways to connect those people with the school. Students themselves have expertise that they may be able to share with staff and peers to increase engagement. I believe that there is extensive expertise in any school community of which staff members may be unaware. Once the change plan begins, hopefully, school leaders will discover expertise in the community that surprises and engages all stakeholders.

Potential implementation issues. Besides resistant stakeholders and the struggle for resources, there will likely be other implementation issues. One such problem may be the reaction of central office staff to the school having only one goal. As stated before, some school districts have multiple strategic priorities and the superintendent prefers that the school goals reflect those priorities. There are several ways that a school administrator can react to central office policies including resistance, alignment or coherence (Mintrop, 2012). The school leaders could simply align with district policy and adopt all district priorities, but both Hattie (2015a) and Fullan and Quinn (2016) have determined that focusing on fewer goals is more beneficial to the change process. If the school leaders chose to resist having multiple strategic priorities, they might decide to

only implement only one or two priorities, against the wishes of the superintendent. Possibly, the change leader could use evidence from Fullan and Quinn (2016) to support the benefits of focusing on one initiative at a time. The superintendent may be persuaded to accept a single goal if the change leader convinces him that a focused strategy is more effective than an overwhelming or fragmented strategy (Fullan & Quinn, 2016).

However, if the superintendent is firm on having multiple strategic priorities, the most reasonable response is coherence to both the mandate of the school district and the needs of the school. It is possible to word the strategies so that they support the engagement change plan. For example, the strategic priority in the fine arts may be phrased so that it encourages student engagement in the fine arts with community partners. In this way, the other stated goals would contribute to the success of our primary goal – increased student engagement.

Another possible implementation issue could be stakeholder concerns that new engagement strategies will lead to reduced PAT marks. Traditional strategies have led to good to excellent PAT marks. My first reaction to the concern about PAT marks is to argue that the marks are not how we should be judging the success of students. There are problems with standardized testing, one being that the material tested and test-taking skills become the focus of teaching, rather than other valuable skills and content (Jones & Egley, 2007). This line of argument may be unsuccessful with those who feel strongly about accountability measures. Therefore, the argument can be made that increasing student engagement will increase grades (Fredricks et al., 2004). It is reasonable to ask teachers to make some effort toward new engagement strategies with the expectation that these strategies will increase grades.

A further problem may arise from parents who have enjoyed a place of influence in the school due to roles they have played in supporting the school in traditional ways such as fundraising, events planning and supporting communications. Some parents have benefited from the LMX (Northouse, 2013) leadership style that has been in play in the school. Many parents have helped extensively in the school and in return they have had influence in school-based decisions. Leaders may experience resistance from parents who do not want to give up a position of power. The best message to offer to these parents is that the additional people working with the school will lead to additional people to benefit each student. The new influx of support people and the diverse collaborative team should be able to lighten the load of parents who have traditionally spent many hours volunteering in their children's school. Ideally, as the community celebrates successes, all parents will come to enjoy the new collaborative strategies.

Building momentum. It is important to celebrate small gains throughout the change process in order to keep people motivated to continue working toward the end goal (Cawsey et al., 2016). Those people who make changes toward a more engaging culture early in the process should be recognized for their work, in the hopes that additional people will join in the movement. Usually, people join in the change process gradually (Cawsey et al., 2016, p. 203). As more people see the gradual change, more will come to understand the value of the change and adopt engaging strategies as well. Change leaders recognize incremental goals as the change process progresses.

In the short-term, change leaders encourage teachers to engage more with the community. Administrators recognize improvements when they see more parents and community members working in the classrooms with the students. As well, more classes

going off school property for learning activities will be considered an improvement. These short-term gains can be celebrated through notices on social media and in the school newsletter as well as by sharing photos of activities shared at school assemblies. Many schools already share successes in athletics and the arts using these strategies.

Medium-term goals include increased student attendance at school as well as better attendance from students and parents at events such as open house, meet the teacher nights, and parent-teacher interviews. Members of the collaborative change team can collect data on attendance at events and share this with the community through social media, posters in the school, newsletters, and assemblies. Stakeholders in the school community will want to be informed about how the change plan is progressing. It is important to continually remind people that they are part of a bigger picture (Fullan & Quinn, 2016, p.58) by demonstrating how efforts to increase student engagement fit with the collaborative school plan.

The long-term goal for this change plan is increased student engagement. Engagement has been measured by the Tell Them From Me survey (Learning Bar, 2016). The change leaders will keep track of data over several years in order to record the progress of the project. Ideally, the trends will show that student engagement increases, particularly with the Grade 9 students who previously showed low rates of engagement. Communication must be continually kept up in an effort to remind stakeholders of the focus as well as of progress. A more detailed communication plan is explained later in this chapter.

Limitations. Two limitations need to be discussed: first, a single survey is used to determine the initial state of student engagement; and second, this change plan makes the

assumption that a school culture can be changed. Student engagement may be assessed with the Tell Them from Me (Learning Bar, 2016) survey at the beginning of the plan and other methods can be used in future cycles. The success of this OIP depends on the culture of the school changing through administration of the change plan, but it is possible that the culture of the school cannot be changed.

One limitation of this change plan is that the results rely on the outcome of the Tell Them From Me survey (Learning Bar, 2016). There are several engagement surveys to choose from. The school district chose Tell Them from Me (Learning Bar, 2016) because it is easily administered, easily accessed, and promoted by Alberta Education. Self-reporting surveys may not be as reliable as interviews or observations by a researcher. Perhaps, once the change plan is in operation, change leaders may choose to do formal or informal surveys of students to determine whether the plan has changed the level of student engagement in school.

This plan also assumes that the culture of an organization can be changed. Change agents become analysts of the culture, which involves "hidden and complex aspects of life in groups" (Schein, 2010, p.9). Culture is impacted by the founders of the group and is then formed by the shared history. The shared history cannot be changed; it can only be built upon. The actions taken in this change plan will add to the shared history, but cannot take away from the accumulated past events. The beliefs, values and basic underlying assumptions are very difficult to change. Therefore, the attitudes of teachers, administrators, parents and students may be very difficult to alter regardless of the strength of the plan.

Change Process Monitoring and Evaluation

The purpose of this OIP is to determine how school leaders can change a school culture to increase the engagement of disengaged students. The change plan is the first step in an ongoing change cycle. The change process requires those who carry out this plan to enact the *plan, do, study, act* (PDSA) cycle in a repeated improvement model (Moen & Norman, 2009). A 90-day cycle is a reasonable length in which to implement, evaluate, and determine necessary changes for the next cycle (Park, Takahashi & White, 2014). Within the context of this OIP, the change leaders need time and possibly repeated endeavours to develop a successful model of collaboration that engages a diverse group of students. The PDSA cycle will allow the leaders to repeatedly experiment with strategies for engagement until the plan meets its goals.

Plan

The first step of the PDSA cycle is to plan for an initial test, while keeping all stakeholders cognizant of the focus. In this OIP, the focus is on creating a culture of engagement for a diverse group of students. Included is information from research that demonstrates strategies that could be used to bring about the desired outcome. In this case, the research demonstrates that schools must allow students to have some influence in their own education (Harris, 2010) and students need to recognize that school is connected to their lives (McMahon, 2003) in order for them to become engaged with school. Included in this OIP is a plan for carrying out the suggested strategies based on theory and evidence. At this point, the plan is ready to be put into action.

Do

In this stage, the theory needs to be tested and observed in action. At this stage of this change plan, the theories are put through a trial. Our school implements the change plan as outlined in the previous section. The school administration consults the school community, develops a collaborative change team and implements recommended changes to increase student engagement.

While the change plan is being enacted, the change team monitors the progress. The change team is comprised of a school administrator, and a diverse group of students, staff and parents who represent the wide range of identities within the school community. One person of the change team is responsible for recording observations about the changes as they are reported to the group. Although all members of the team are making observations, one person needs to coordinate and record the feedback for a cohesive message. A record of both anecdotal and formal feedback that the change team receives is helpful in planning future cycles (Park et al., 2014). Struggles or problems as well as positive changes are recorded. The team specifically looks for indicators of increased student engagement. They want to know if students are reporting feeling differently about school, are attending more often, or are improving their academic outcomes. For example, if the change leaders find that the lowest attending 10% of students have improved their attendance by 25%, they would recognize this progress and share it with the community. Anecdotal reports of positive feelings about school should also be noted. Feedback should be shared frequently, so in the early days of the cycle, the change team has biweekly meetings.

Study

Toward the completion of the 90-day cycle, students and parents could complete a short survey about changes to student engagement. I recommend a version of an engagement survey created by the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education and used in other studies (Gaydos, 2008). This survey provides a free and quick method to garner opinions from those who may not have otherwise provided feedback.

Another excellent tool for monitoring the change brought about by this plan is the equity audit as provided in equity audit (Murray & West-Burns, 2011). Again, we remember that student engagement is increased when the school experience reflects the lives and cultures of the students it serves (McMahon, 2003). The equity continuum (Murray & West-Burns, 2011) was used early in this plan to evaluate the school environment and it can be used again (after a cycle of the plan) to measure if there are any changes in the school with regard to reflecting diverse student cultures.

The change team reviews the data from the survey, the audit, and feedback gathered during the trial to determine the success of the trial. Information acquired from a variety of sources allows the change team to triangulate the information to identify problems and strengths with the engagement strategy. While analyzing results, the team should note any surprising outcomes. Unexpected results should not be dismissed, because they may indicate factors that were not previously considered.

During this phase, the team also notes factors that should not change. There are some strategies or structures that should remain in place because they are working. The member of the change team who records feedback should also keep a record of successes. The team will consider how these successes can be replicated. For instance, if a particular

group of students has demonstrated increased engagement, the reasons for that success should be examined for the benefit of future cycles.

As well, the change team should compare data collected to the predictions made (Moen & Norman, 2009). The change plan is based on the belief that by involving more aspects of students' lives outside of school, the students will be more engaged with school. There are likely parts of the plan that were successful and others that were not during the trial. All outcomes are collected in a summarizing report to be shared with the school community.

Act

Change leaders can draw conclusions based on the summary report, which acts, just as in the scientific method, as a record of observations of the experiment. During the act phase, the change team will determine what aspects of the plan need to be different for future cycles.

There are several ways that the plan may need altering. It is possible that the change team itself will need modification. Members may need to be added or removed or roles of members may require adjusting. Possibly, teachers or other staff may require additional support. The communication plan may be adjusted to improve future test cycles. There will be unanticipated problems since the change team cannot possibly foresee every variable.

At this point the team can make an adjusted plan and enact a new cycle. A school will likely be able to run two cycles per year. I would not recommend more than two cycles because students and parents may become fatigued with doing the survey and not provide genuine responses. As well, trying to do the analysis more than twice in a school

year could lead to rushing the PDSA cycle. In a process that relies so heavily on interpersonal relationships, change leaders will be wise to use care in each stage of the change process.

Leadership Ethics and Organizational Change

The purpose of this change plan is to enhance the culture of a school in order to engage people, particularly students, who are disengaged with school. In the process of encouraging positive change in a school, the change leaders hold responsibility to promote an ethical school environment (Starratt, 1991). During each stage of the change - awakening, mobilization, acceleration, and institutionalization (Cawsey et al., 2016) – different ethical considerations and challenges arise.

Awakening

In order to begin a conversation regarding the lack of student engagement in the school, the change leader will use data to develop a firm understanding of the problem. One ethical responsibility to consider in this plan is anonymization. The subjects in any study have the right to expect privacy of any personal information that is shared during the study. In the case of the Tell Them From Me survey (Learning Bar, 2016), data are not linked to individual participants because the primary data were coded with random codes. Follow-up surveys done as part of regular monitoring in the district require care to protect subjects' privacy. In this OIP, the data we are using are available to the school community. The participants in the survey know that the results will be used for school improvement.

In this change plan, the change leader is also, to some extent the researcher. The change leader administers the survey and interprets the results. As the researcher, the

leader needs to be honest about his or her position in relation to the study. In the context of this OIP, the change leader reports truthfully about the levels of disengagement reported by students responding to both formal and informal surveys. As well, when the equity continuum (Murray & West-Burns, 2011) is done early in the plan and again to follow up, the leaders look objectively at the equity situation in their own school. Honesty is a key characteristic of ethical leadership (Northouse, 2013). The leader needs to interact honestly so that the community recognizes her or him as reliable and trustworthy.

During this early stage in the change process, trust is important as the leader begins to communicate with diverse stakeholders. Trust leads to the followers having faith that the leader can create positive change. The leader will have a strong impact on the school community, if they trust the leader (Northouse, 2013). Trust leads to stronger leader-follower relationships (Liu, 2015).

Mobilization

The mobilization stage relies on relationships. In this stage, the change leader is cultivating relationships with diverse people in the change community including parents, students, teachers and community members. In an ethical school, working relationships between school, home and community are nurtured (Starratt, 2012). In the context of this OIP, relationships are key to the progress and success of the change plan.

People with both formal and informal influence will come together to form a change team. The change leader continually engages in conversations with a wide variety of people. These conversations will help the change leader to understand the situation through the eyes of others (Baird, 2015). By understanding others' points of view, the

change leader is inclined to act more ethically. In the context of this OIP, the change leader understands the diversity of the school in order to lead toward a solution that engages diverse students.

Starratt's (1991) three foundational ethical themes of care, critique, and justice help to organize thoughts on how the change leader can behave ethically. The ethic of care is embodied in this stage as the diverse people are working together, in relationship with each other. Successful change leaders recognize the value of diverse personalities, knowledge, skills and abilities as assets that can benefit the whole community. An ethical leader demonstrates reverence for the dignity and uniqueness of each person in the school community (Liu, 2015; Starratt, 1991). Ideally, the leader's modeling sets a positive cultural tone (Starratt, 1991) for the school, which is particularly important to this OIP for encouraging diverse people to collaborate.

The ethic of critique comes into play as the leader identifies problematic structures in the school organization. For example, the traditional hierarchical structure of the school allows some to have power, at the expense of others. The change leader begins to discuss the need for diverse people to be involved with the school. As the diverse group of people begins to examine the lack of engagement in the school, the leader will begin to identify who has advantages, and whose voices are and are not being heard in the school (Starratt, 1991). As the community comes to a better understanding of the power disparities between groups within the school community, the momentum for change will grow.

Acceleration

During the acceleration stage, the ethic of justice moves the change leader to act on the identified injustices (Starratt, 1991). The school community values (Baird, 2015) are put into action at this point. At the acceleration stage, the leader is working with a diverse change team. Now, the school administration can go beyond denouncing inequality to make changes (Liu, 2015).

People in the school community who did not previously impact decision-making gain the opportunity to have a voice on the change team. With the creation of the change team, power shifts from those parents who have traditionally had their voices heard by administration to those in the community who were previously marginalized. Leading ethically often involves challenging the status quo (Liu, 2015).

As well, the administration can use this opportunity to empower staff members through the change process (Grieves, 2010). Engaged staff members require training and planning time to enact change. The administration has a social responsibility to work with staff members to promote changes that benefit the school and the wider community. One way they can fulfill that responsibility is through supporting deeper learning by teachers, parents and other influential adults.

Institutionalization

At this point in the change process, levels of engagement will be increased for some students. It is important to continually monitor the engagement of all students because it may be difficult to determine which groups of students will respond positively to the changes. The leader has an ethical responsibility to care for the needs of all students.

The adults' perception of engagement may vary among those adults who are monitoring the changes in the school. It is important for leaders to pay attention to different interpretations of engagement (Vibert & Shields, 2003). Ethical leaders continually have dialogue with diverse stakeholders, particularly those who hold a different opinion from their own. Difference has the potential to lead to creativity (Grieves, 2010; Liu, 2015). That is, those with different perspectives can contribute insights that might not otherwise be considered. It is both wise and ethical to consider different points of view.

Finally, the policy and practical changes become part of the new and evolving school culture. Leaders should keep in mind the importance of ensuring that new policies make sense within their local school context. There are many formal and informal structures involved in each individual school. Any changes employed within a school need to be suitable for that school's individual context (Liu, 2015). The change leader has a responsibility to the school community to develop an ethical school that prepares students to lead ethical lives.

Change Process Communications Plan

Communication impacts the success of a change plan. A communications plan enables the change team to share a focused message with those who most need to receive it. Consistent and accurate communication will increase transparency and thereby improve conditions for trust and support (Cawsey et al., 2016). A summary of the communications plan for this OIP is provided in Table 1.

This communication plan first explains why the change is needed. Next, the plan describes how the changes impact students, staff, parents and the school community. As

the change plan progresses, the communications plan continues to keep people informed of the progress. With this strategy, stakeholders develop and maintain enthusiasm and commitment (Cawsey et al., 2016) for the duration of the change project.

Table 1

Communications Plan Summary

Timeline	Target Audience	Key Message	Tactics
August (Plan)	Staff	Student engagement matters.	One-to-one conversations. Presentation at staff meeting.
September (Plan)	Parents	Student engagement matters. We want the community involved in our school.	Conversations at meet the teacher night. Brochure. Email.
October -November (Do)	School community including students, parents, and the community in general.	Student engagement matters. We want the community involved in our school. We have experienced some success.	Press release. Social media. Email.
December (Study, Act)	School community	Let us know what you think about our engagement strategy.	Social media. Email.
January – March (Plan, Do)	School community	Student engagement matters. We want the community involved in our school. We have experienced some success and we want more success.	Press release. Open house. Social media. Email.

April (Study and prepare for a new cycle in the fall)	School community	Let us know what you think about our engagement strategy.	Social media. Email.

Target Audience

The target audience for the communication is, first, the school staff; second, the parents; and then the wider school community. The staff is mainly an experienced group of people who value high academic standards, a strong work ethic, and exemplary behavior. Parents are a more diverse group, but their key concerns about education have been gathered and synthesized. The parents of Alberta students were consulted during a province-wide educational review in 2010 (Alberta Education, 2010). From that process, Alberta Education found parents wanted their children to become ethical, entrepreneurial and engaged citizens. For the most part, Alberta parents who were surveyed wanted their children to be moral, innovative, actively involved members of their community (Alberta Education, 2010). The general view of our school community is likely to be similar to opinions revealed in the 2010 study of a representative group of Alberta parents.

The consultation results impact the communications strategy. It is significant to this OIP that parents support the notion of engaged students. Albertans who engaged in the consultation process wanted their children to be involved with their schools and communities (Alberta Education, 2010). Schools have an opportunity to communicate with parents that the goals of this change plan are the same as their goals for their children, although, parents may have a different notion of what an ethical, engaged, and entrepreneurial education will look like. This communications strategy attempts to

explain that the tactics contained in this OIP will support students in becoming more engaged in their school.

Objectives

The primary goal of this OIP is to have more students feel engaged in school. In order to achieve this goal, the primary goal of the communication plan is to increase the interactions between students, teachers, and significant adults in the students' lives. The change team will determine the most appropriate specific goals for the school communication plan at the time of implementation, but it is advisable that the communication plan focus on having more of the adults who are significant in the students' lives involved with the school on a regular basis. A possible specific goal may be to increase guest speakers in the classrooms by 50% by the next 90-day cycle through school communications. Further, we may be able to increase parental attendance at parent teacher interview night by 25% by the next reporting period through use of email and various media communications. Achievement of these goals would demonstrate that the communication strategies have been successful.

Key Messages

There are several key principles in this OIP that the change team will communicate with the school community. First, school leaders will inform the school community that student engagement matters because engaged students have higher attendance rates, feel a greater sense of belonging and achieve increased academic outcomes (Fredricks et al. 2004). Also, when students recognize something of themselves in their education, they become more engaged (McMahon, 2003). This plan is aimed at producing a school culture that collaborates with the diverse school community since that

is most engaging for students (Smyth, et al. 2013). Second, this plan aims to encourage community members to share their unique perspective with the school in order to develop an engaging culture. The message sent encourages members of the school community to be involved and engaged with the school.

Communication Tactics

The tone of this communication plan is enthusiastic and positive. From the start, the change leader expresses the potential benefits of the OIP, and even during difficulties, the tone of communications continues to be optimistic. As well, those people who speak on behalf of the change plan are knowledgeable without being overconfident about why student engagement matters and how the school staff can achieve their goals with the help of community.

Initially, the change leader needs to focus on getting agreement from district and school administration. The most effective strategy for gaining support is one-to-one conversation. The change leader will personally introduce the change plan to school administration and district administration during personal meetings. Perhaps, the change leader will be invited to explain the strategy to the school board in a presentation, but this may occur after the change plan has begun.

The change plan will also be introduced to the school staff in person. Time can be assigned at a staff meeting early in the school year for strategic planning. The change leader communicates the reasons for focusing on student engagement and suggests strategies for implementation. Staff members have the opportunity to consider how they choose to support the initiative. Two-way communication, established early in the discussions, ensures that the change leader listens to staff ideas on the topic. Future

professional development made available for staff allows them to learn more about the engagement initiatives and for staff to contribute their thoughts to the process. As well, staff members are invited to join the change team, which also includes members of the community.

Parent groups learn about the change plan at the meet the teacher event that is usually scheduled within the first two weeks of the school year. This event provides an opportunity for the school administration to deliver a message directly to parents, followed by less formal conversations between school staff and parents. The informal conversations provide parents a forum to ask questions about the school in general and more specifically about the change plan.

A brief brochure could be provided to parents who are interested in learning more about the engagement strategy in their own time. Included in the brochure are the objectives and key messages of the change plan. As well, the brochure includes contact information for the school administrators and the change leader so that questions and suggestions may be emailed or otherwise directed to those people. In my experience, sending home a brochure with every student is not an effective strategy. Written material that is directly handed to the intended recipient is much more effective. Depending on the protocols of the school district, the content of the brochure may need to be reviewed by district communications personnel. In this case, the change leader should ensure that the brochures are submitted for approval.

To follow up the meet the teacher event, school administration currently sends weekly emails to parents regarding school news and events. Nearly every parent provides an email address to the school through which they already receive messages about school

activities such as arts, sports and extracurricular activities. Parents will continue to receive messages about the change plan as it develops.

Once parents are aware of the change plan, the change team may issue a media release. Again, the key messages of the project are shared in a positive and enthusiastic tone. The local context will dictate who receives the press release. In this community, and in others there are a few popular local radio stations that can be contacted because they have traditionally been effective and helpful in sharing school messages. Other important media formats in the community are the school and district web sites, Facebook and the newspaper.

As the change plan is implemented, it is important to celebrate successes in order to maintain the project's momentum. At this point, it is important to remember the students as a significant audience for communications. Since social media is a meaningful communication tool for students, celebrations of engagement success may be communicated through a school's social media accounts. Currently, many schools celebrate special events by posting photos on Instagram and Twitter. Celebratory posts on social media inspire further student engagement. Because a social media campaign's effectiveness is limited by the number of followers the account reaches, it would be wise to talk to students about all of the school's social media accounts and ask them to submit pictures to the account administrator to be posted. Only the administrator can post on the school account, but with more students featured on social media, more student traffic can be stimulated.

Timeline

The communications plan should be initiated early in the school year to take advantage of the optimistic tone at school start up as well as events such as meet the teacher nights. Change leaders will begin working with teachers at the August staff meeting and will continue to follow up throughout the school year.

The communications plan is tied to the 90-day PDSA cycle. The first cycle runs from September to the end of November. The change team evaluates both the change plan and the communication plan in early December. Adjustments that the change team determines are necessary roll out with new enthusiasm in January. Instead of a meet the teacher night, an open house in February allows for a renewal of face-to-face communication.

Evaluation

The change team evaluates the communication plan at the end of each PDSA cycle, likely in December and April. Team members will know the plan has been successful if their objectives are met. If the number of adults who are involved in the school through presentations, events, field trips, and general visits has increased then the communication strategy has been effective.

If the numbers have changed little, then the change team needs to make modifications for the next cycle. Through their contact with the school community, the team will determine what needs adjustments for future cycles. This communication plan is flexible. As opportunities and challenges arise, the change team adapts communications to suit the situation.

Next Steps and Future Considerations

The next step for this change plan is implementation. This OIP combines theory with experience to derive a strategy that is ready for a school community to execute. Ideally, a school leader will put this plan into action and document the results. After one or two cycles of the plan, a follow up report would help team members and others understand how schools can change their culture to engage disengaged students. The summary report that the change team composes after a change cycle should be shared with other schools, so that more people can benefit from the lessons learned by one school. If the change leader moves to another position, a new change leader could take up this plan and guide the change process. Alternatively, the change leader may modify the plan to make it effective in a different school and context.

One significant notion that reappears throughout this OIP is that context matters. When a school adopts this change plan, the change team for that school will have to make it fit in that particular school community. One solution is not suitable for every situation. For example, the diversity of the change team needs to reflect the composition of the school community itself. In schools with a significant number of First Nations students, the change leader would be wise to integrate First Nations teachings and traditions into the plan.

As well, this plan does not specify what type of adults should be involved in the school to engage students further in their learning activities. Adults from various cultures, backgrounds, and careers should be chosen based on the needs of the specific groups of students in the school. Leaders consult a new group of students each school year to ensure that measures taken to engage students are effective with the changing student

population. Decisions such as who to bring into schools need to be made, with the students, and must take into consideration of the curriculum and the community. Local context will dictate the specifics of implementation of this change plan.

Another important lesson to heed is to be flexible. Since every school context is unique and the plan has not yet been tested, it is important to consider that the changes may have unintended results. For instance, some changes may negatively impact students who are already engaged. Another possibility is that groups in the local community may have unanticipated reactions to the change plan. We do not know how individual communities will react to the changes as they are implemented. Therefore, the change plan may need to be adjusted as it progresses.

In future cycles of the change plan, opportunities may arise that would benefit the process if the change team is flexible. For example, money for this plan will likely be limited, but it is possible that a benefactor may come forward with financial support. Similarly, a partnership opportunity could arise with a local business or learning institution to aid with implementation. This partnering would promote additional collaboration. If an opportunity is presented that has not been described in this OIP, change leaders should at least consider the possibilities.

The importance of collaboration frequently arises in this change plan. There could be stakeholders who support the ideas of student engagement, but do not feel comfortable collaborating with colleagues. In future cycles of the plan, some support or training could be provided specifically about collaborative teaching strategies or adults working in groups. Clearly, collaboration is integral to this OIP, but it does not come easily to everyone.

The collaborative nature of this OIP improves the sustainability of the project. Since many people are involved in its development and implementation, there are more people who have the capacity to lead the project should there be a change in personnel at the school (Hargreaves, 2007). The collaborative change team facilitates members of the school learning from each other and creating a system of networks among the various team members. Because of these networks, the change team will be more resilient when changes in the community occur (Hargreaves, 2007). The project and the leadership are more sustainable due to the number of people who have developed leadership capacity.

Conclusion

The problem of practice in this OIP is to determine how formal and informal school leaders can change a school culture to increase student engagement. The plan is based on the belief that students are more engaged when the school reflects the diversity in their lived experiences (McMahon, 2003). The influence of critical theory (Freire, 1971; Grieves, 2010) is evident in the OIP in the ways that students and their families are engaged in the change strategy. A significant goal of this plan is to empower many members of the school community. Students are empowered as they recognize more of their lives within the context of their school experiences. Parents and community members are empowered as they share their strengths and knowledge with students. School staff members are empowered as they make choices about how to implement the change strategies in their classes and as they collaborate with colleagues. All members of the school community become learning partners as they deepen their understanding of how to engage disengaged students.

By fostering and developing relationships between students, parents, staff and community, student engagement can increase. A clearly communicated, focused message helps stakeholders understand each step of the change plan. The culture of the school will be positively impacted by a shared experience that embraces the diversity of the community. The process includes noteworthy challenges, but schools can engage disengaged students through cultural change.

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