Change Management Plan

Pender County Schools

MIT 530

UNCW

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Introduction

A training needs assessment (TNA) was conducted in Pender county schools to investigate where the district was in relation to the new State Strategic plan "21st century schools". A detailed and systematic process was followed to determine use of technology for teaching and professional development among the teachers and principles of the district.

After a careful analysis of the data, the report cites several recommendations to bring PCS to the standards set forth by the State plan. All but two of the 9 relate directly with Professional development. They are listed below:

> 2 -Skill based Technology Professional Development
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> 4 -District Collaboration and Communication Software Suite
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> 5 - Administrative Professional Development
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> 6 - "21st Century" professional development
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> 7 - Expand the use of Moodle
>
> 8 - Annual District 'Technology Conference"
>
> 9 - Promotion of Global Professional Communities

This change management plan will (1) outline general strategies for managing system wide innovations and (2) provide specific ideas for the implementation of the recommendations listed above. The time frame for the implementation of the plan will align with the 4 year technology plan for the county. The State DPI has mandated a new technology plan be implemented by September 2008. It is hoped that the strategies and recommendations of this report will influence the technology plan for PCS. The goal is to further the adoption and the continued use of 21st century tools by the teachers, principals, and administration of PCS.

The two main general tenants for this plan are "systematic change" and "dedicated change agents". The current technology coordinator and the schools technology assistants will redefine themselves as change agents. Each innovation will have a champion that guides the users and monitors the adoption within the system.

There are three physical innovations: 1) an innovation website that details all innovations marked for adoption by the District will regulate and demystify the change process, 2) Demonstrations and professional development trainings will encourage the use of 'professional learning community' style collaboration and support, and 3) A 'showcase' style technology conference and newsletter will make the innovations observable and 'celebrate the success' of technology innovation.

Summary of Change Proposal

A sense of community will be formed that allows for sustained and systematic growth of professional development that follows the 6 phases of technology adoption for individuals (Awareness, Interest, Evaluation, Trial, Adoption, and Integration). Additionally, each innovative technique or tool will be explained and described according to the 5 characteristics of diffusion of innovation (Observe-ability, Trial-ability, Compatibility, Complexity, and Relative Advantage). The diffusion of these innovations through the system will be planned using the stepping stone strategy.

The stakeholders and the system will continually be analyzed to determine the best possible solutions to existing and developing problems. Forces for and against the innovations will be determined and accounted for in material and strategies.

The plan outlines a simple, focused support of innovation that follows the established theories of diffusion of innovation. The changes must be made as simple as possible because complexity is a factor in innovation adoption. If an innovation is too complex, people will not accept it. This plan proposes a focused, thematic approach to innovation introduction. In this way the adopters have a context for further innovations in the theme.

The technology coordinator, a district level position, is currently in charge of managing technology innovations in the district and creates a district technology plan. They work closely with the technology assistants located at each school. This plan calls for them to alter their self perception to that of a 'change team' consisting of 'change agents'. It is imperative to demystify the role of change agents and the nature of change management. Once the mindset shifts, innovations will progress more smoothly and systematically through the system.

Identification of the major stakeholders

Pender County Schools is a large system. There are 16 schools, 500 employees and close to eight thousand students. Change and innovation happens frequently in the system, but we are concerned with managing the change for optimal performance of the schools goals. In order to deal with the large number of people, we group the stakeholders by roles. There are five major groups: District administration, principals and school administration, teachers, the technology team or change team, the technology coordinator.

The District administration holds formal leadership and accountability over the system. They are a mixed group according to attitude towards change and must carefully weigh the risks of early adoption because of its leadership position. The principals, similarly, hold formal authority over their individual schools and exercise leadership and influence over the individuals in the school. The principals are a very visible stakeholder and have the power to mandate change. The school office staff also has a considerable and often overlooked leadership as they are often in charge of implementation and operation of technology tools mandated by the state and district. Teachers are the majority stakeholder in the PCS system. They are a heterogeneous group according to skills, knowledge and attitude for innovation. Inside this group are innovators and resistors. A key challenge is to find the innovators and resistors in order to support and guide them, as they are both very important to controlled and planned change. It is the teacher who we hope to guide to using a more community approach to professional development.

The last two major stakeholders are the change team (made of technology assistants from each school) and the technology coordinator. These two stakeholders are always accounted for as resources for innovation. The Technology Coordinator directs resources for the district and is responsible for implementing change on the district level. The technology assistants implement the tech. coordinator's direction and are community leaders for their school. While the technology coordinator has budgetary authority, the assistants have no formal authority. One important note concerning the technology team is that they think of themselves as 'trainers' and not necessarily as

change agents. This mindset is reflected in how they approach the job of introducing and diffusing innovation throughout the schools.

It is worth considering 'often overlooked stakeholders' in the system. School and county administrative staff represent the operational face of the school and county leadership. It is the staff that actually implements change and must be supported in the adoption process. Parents are ultimately responsible for the children's education and the Parent teacher association can provide a vital link between the two communities. The communication link has the potential to benefit change management activities in the district.

Forces for and against the innovation

Within PCS there are groups of users and stakeholders in the innovation (Appendix B). These groups have "commonly held values and beliefs, characteristic modes of thought and behavior, shared circumstances, common needs, and commonly perceived group objectives" (Havelock p. 136). It is important to account for these groups in the management plan to better adjust strategies for widespread and easy adoption.

Because of the heterogeneous nature of most groups in the system, we will simply break down the groups as those 'for innovation' and those 'against innovation'. Starting from the top of the hierarchy, the county leadership and staff for innovation see the strategic benefits of technology and are concerned with the State Mandates. Those against see additional duties, are averse to learning something new, have serious time constraints, and are possibly embarrassed by lack of knowledge and skills.

Principals of the individual schools are also a heterogeneous group. Those favoring innovation in professional development see the vision in the state and county strategic technology plan and hope to gain operational advantage from innovation. Those against innovation are unwilling to support unproven or unfamiliar technologies and techniques, have an 'if it ain't broke, don't fix it' attitude, or see additional duties and costs that offer limited rewards.

Teachers vary widely concerning stance towards change in technology enhanced professional development. Those for changes seek an advantage (such as reducing time or increase student performance), value collaboration and sharing resources. Those against change cite time constraints, see no benefit for the amount of work, don't have perquisite skills or knowledge, or bad past experience.

It is an important point to accept the values and positions of the innovation detractors. They establish a challenge to the change team that must be overcome before widespread adoption can take place. As Havelock puts it, they are the antibodies in the blood stream that defend the status quo. The systematic change plan will address concerns of the detractors for the betterment of all.

Strategies for Change

General Strategies

PCS needs systematic simple focused technology innovation that follows established theory and managed by a team of 'change agents'.

The first step is to adjust the self-conception or identity of the technology team from that of "trainers" to "change agents". The plan outlines the processes of a change agent and hopes that the PCS technology team adopts the process and vision of a change agent team. The team will be headed by the technology coordinator whose role should shift to managing a group of project managers. Each component of the professional learning community will get a project manager or change agent responsible and accountable for guiding the innovation thru the systematic process established by the group and based on sound diffusion of innovation theory

The second step is to create a systematic and reliable process for change to happen. The systematic process should be simple, focused, and follow establish diffusion of innovation theory processes. A major force against technology innovation is complexity. People feel technology is too complex. And, many times it is. Nothing can be done about that. However, the nature of effort to support and encourage innovation adoption can change. Users deserve a simplified and customized support for innovation. In order to increase simplicity and improve focus, only a few related innovations will be promoted at once. A focused approach on a few innovations to promote and disseminate will yield a better result than a general approach to a wide array of innovations. The users will understand the theme and develop context for related innovations. Innovations will be methodically targeted, prepared, evaluated, introduced, trained, and supported. Changes to the system will be planned according to Havelock's CREATE-R and Rogers' five critical characteristics. The change management team must use theory to guide their activities. Indeed, the process must be made plain for all stakeholders from the Superintendent to the school secretaries. Having a common terminology will better the communication between all stakeholders. The theories which are most important are: The five characteristics of innovation diffusion, Havelock's CREATE-R, and the six phases of individual innovation adoption process (Appendix A), and the stepping stone process of group adoption.

In support of the first two general steps and innovation in general, a website should be created that serves as a portal for each technology tool in the PCS system. The purpose is to create a trusted source for localized information about tools, techniques, as well as community information such as calendars for trainings and meetings (both on and off site). The website should reflect the new 'change team' identity of the technology coordinator and the technology assistants. Since individuals use the site, the format should align with the 6 phases of technology adoption for individuals (Awareness, Interest, Evaluation, Trial, Adoption, and Integration), in addition to the 5 characteristics of diffusion of innovation (Observ-ability, Trial-ability, Compatibility, Complexity, and Relative Advantage). Each innovation will be inserted into a structured template that very clearly defines its characteristics and includes materials targeting individuals at each step in the adoption cycle. The repetitive, common structure of the site will promote comfort trying new things as the users become familiar. The change team will use it to display and collect information about the innovations and to dispel concerns of detractors.

Specific strategies for creating Professional Learning Communities

The general strategies listed above will work for whichever innovation is chosen. The specific strategies listed below concern changing the professional development at PCS to embrace the concept of 'Professional Learning communities'. The specific strategies will serve as a model for other innovations in the future.

Most of the recommendations from the Needs assessment report dealt with professional development and the ideas of collaboration and community. These recommendations fall neatly under the theme of 'Professional Learning Communities'.

Individual Strategies

The two strategies that will make the most difference to individuals in the PCS community are demonstrations and a technology showcase. Each strategy can activate the 6 phases and 5 characteristics of innovation adoption. (Appendix D)

Two places that demonstrations would work best are at the teacher workday, face to face, training sessions and screencasts on the website. At the face to face training sessions, trainers IN ANY SUBJECT could use Moodle or another community style website like a blog or wiki to actively encourage participation, sharing, collaboration and reflection. This could be done before, during, and/or after the actual session. By modeling the use of tools of a professional learning community, the trainers or change team members are highlighting many of the 6 phases and 5 characteristics, and they are 'Practicing what they preach'. The tools and concepts used are observable and show relative advantage. This reduces the fear of the unknown and issues of complexity. For example, if the class take 15 minutes for each class member to create blogger.com blogs and share the addresses. All six phases of the adoption process can be furthered during a good demonstration, depending on where the individual is in the process. For example, if a person was unaware of blogs, creating one with the help of other classmates would generate awareness and interest and would lead to trial (if only mental) and eventually adoption and integration. If for example, a class member was aware of blogs and interested, a good demonstration could move them to the steps of adoption and integration.

On the website, the technology coordinator / change agent can be specific in targeting individuals in certain phases of the cycle and certain characteristics of the innovation. Screencasts and videos of lectures could be posted and possibility 'user submitted' to allow users to build confidence in attempting adoption. Furthermore, the community building aspects of user submitted material can't be underestimated. Not only does it show localized uses, but also boosts the integration phase (in the submitter) and observability characteristics (for the viewers).

The second useful strategy is the idea of showcase or 'celebration of success'. Communities must celebrate. It allows for self definition, communication to happen, ideas to grow, and new members to join. The two places for a showcase are newsletters / blogs and a local technology conference. Both innovations allow the change team to extend gaining a wider and deeper acceptance of the ideas highlighted.

A newsletter type blog post or category is a more formal version of the standard blog entry. Its primary purpose is awareness as it should be broadcast as email or some other channel to the entire PCS system. It should celebrate successful implementations of the technology and reward those community members for taking risks of early adopters. Hopefully, this will increase awareness and entice new users to the blog and materials designed to satisfy interest and the other phases of adoption.

A face to face technology conference is an effective idea for community development and furthering technology adoption. Meeting in a face to face environment is much more engaging and personal than a newsletter (also, costs much more). Conference attendees will be able to discuss very easily with presenters and among themselves. This will help them move through the early phases quickly and form connections that will support them as they struggle with adoption and integration phases. In addition, it gives advanced users a chance to display their success and be rewarded with attention and recognition.

Group strategies

Focusing on the individuals of a system is not enough for the successful change management plan. The plan must also consider the key people and the common 'values, beliefs, interests, and backgrounds' of groups of people in the system. A 'stepping stone' strategy is used to account for three types of groups – Innovators, Resistors, and Leaders (Appendix C). In Havelock outlines a 4 step process for managing the change process using these groups.

Step	Actions
1 Cultivate Innovators	- Change team builds a "what's out there" meeting or discussion which monitors the system for new ideas and solutions to the problems. Also changes in the system and new problems - Help each other become sophisticated in the tools already in use by PCS - Actively recruit new teachers for inclusion
2 Address concerns	- Innovators try to dispel resistor's concerns - Post clear FAQs on each innovation information page - Try to not provoke resistors
3 Demo for leader	- Technology showcase conference allows leaders to view demonstrations - Allow stakeholders to observe and innovators to demonstrate - Build a positive attitude for the idea of change and innovation - Encourage collaboration among groups of teachers as to best practices and innovative use of tools
4 Leaders lead	- Provide leaders with a way to guide the 'rest of the system' - Make material and resources clearly available on Innovation website - Train, support, and nurture leaders - Leaders 'lead by example' - Leaders use political influence and formal leadership

See Appendix C for a listing of the different groups inside of PCS

The general strategy for dispelling the detractors of the innovation is to not provoke them and to respond to emergent concerns. Clear information and public plans can keep resistors from mobilizing around rumors and hearsay. A detailed and responsive FAQ section for every innovation will address any concerns vocalized by the community.

The general strategy for supporting the innovators is to provide clear, consistent help, support, and training. The biggest way that is accomplished is through community support. A professional learning community can create a positive feeling and support the affective domain of the new user, which is often marginalized in traditional support models.

Why implement this plan and Pitfalls to avoid

This plan will improve professional development at PCS because of reasons listed below, but there are dangers to be avoided. The dangers include creating more complexity, not generating a supportive community, and motivating the resisters before 'take off'. Technical innovations are complex enough (just try to teach someone to build a website!). If the community doesn't quickly grow to support and generate ideas, then resisters could mobilize and have the innovations removed.

The plan will be successful because the plan is simple and easy to communicate. It treats the stakeholders as professionals. And, most importantly, it follows a theoretical blueprint for innovation adoption. The systematic implementation of the theory will at least provide a good foundation and language with which to start the conversation about how to move forward with positive change.

Appendix A

Stages: C-R-E-A-T-E-(R)

Care – Professional development in PCS needs to be more responsive to innovative technologies, more inclusive of administrative staff, and more collaborative across the school, district, and state level. Superintendent laments the fact that teachers are not sharing ideas and are 'teaching in isolation'. This puts a tremendous (and needless) stress on the teachers.

Relate – Establish the social system map concerning professional development in PCS; build a relationship and establish trust with stakeholders in that system

Examine – Define and examine the problem. May require a second round of training needs assessment

Acquire – Search for available resources concerning the problem. Research other school districts for case studies and professional development innovation and modernization

Try – Allow users to try different solutions and become involve in formative feedback. This participation will continue throughout the innovation.

Extend – Implement the best solution. Go wider and deeper with the innovation into the social system. After the trials, use the theories of innovation characteristics and salesmanship to help the innovation move through the takeoff phase.

Renew – Continue and sustain the change process. Look to see if the environment has changed the original concern.

Appendix A continued

6 phases of technology adoption for individuals

Awareness
System wide announcement email by County and school admin
A friend mentions it
Interest
research on the internet
goto professional learning community website
watch a 1 min teaser or trailer for the tool or service
view a cartoon or an ad for the tool or service
Evaluation
find answers to questions
ask questions of friends face to face or post a question to the website
observe others
Trial
sign up for or begin to use
evaluate and give feedback
take a training conducted by tech assistants
Adoption
participate or use the tool / service
Integration
answer questions posted on the website
tell friends about it
plan and rely on

Appendix B

Identification of common things in the organization

Forces Favoring Innovation	Forces Against Innovation	Importance to system and people	Ease of change
State Strategic plan		10	1
PCS Superintendent		10	5
County Tech plan			5
PCS district administration		5	5
	PCS district administration	5	5
School Principal		10	5
	School Principal	10	5
School Administration		5	5
	School Administration	5	5
Teachers		5	10
	Teachers	5	10
Technology Coordinator		5	5
Technology assistants		10	5

Appendix C

Identification of key people and stepping stone strategies

Group Name	Role in innovation	Resources / Constraints	Stepping Stone Strategies
Principals – for change	Leaders	Resources	Stone 1 and stone 4
Principals – against change	Leaders / resistors	Constraints	Stone 2
Change team	Innovators	Resources	Stone 1
Teachers – for change	Innovators / the rest of the system	Resources	Stone 1 and stone 4
Teachers – against change	Resistors / the rest of the system	Constraints	Stone 2
Administrators – for change	Innovators	Resources	Stone 1
Administrators – against change	Resistors	Constraints	Stone 2
Other groups (students, parents, PTA, Peer school districts)	'The rest of the system'	Resources and Constraints	Stone 5

Stone 1 - Cultivate innovators
- Change team always monitors new ideas and solutions to the problems of the school system
- Help each other become sophisticated in the tools already in use by PCS
- For bottom up change, actively recruit new and innovative teachers

Stone 2 - Address concerns
- Tech teams try to dispell resistor concerns
- Post clear FAQs on each innovation page
- Try to not provoke resisitors

Stone 3 - Demonstrate for leaders
- Technology showcase allows leaders to demonstrate
- allow stakeholders to observe and innovators to demonstrate
- Build a positive attitude for the idea of change and innovation
- For horizontal change vector, encourage collaboration among groups of teachers as to best practices and innovative use of tools

Stone 4 - Leaders lead
- Provide leaders with a way to guide the 'rest of the system'
- Make material and resources clearly available on website
- Train leaders and support the use of tools as an case of 'lead by example'
- For top down change, principals and administration use influence and formal leadership

Appendix D

Strategies for each adoption phase

Strategies	Phases					
	Awareness	**Interest**	**Evaluation**	**Trial**	**Adoption**	**Integration**
Innovation website. Could possibly be Moodle or SchoolLink	Provides access to awareness material But no use if users are unaware	Shows a detailed map for how to incorporate or participate with the Professional development plan	Allows for discussion with Change agent team and other users	Provides resources for trial and tutorials	Shows details about how to start use and get more help	Allows a place ask and answer questions. Establishes a community of users
Incorporation of community tools in administration communication	Because this is an avenue for communication, all users will become aware	Because this is an avenue for communication, all users will become interested	Will provide a model which the users can evaluate		Users feel comfortable the innovation is worthwhile because formal leadership uses	Becomes a part of the school system as more people use it
Face to Face and screencast demonstrations		Generates interest and shows relative advantage	Can discuss face to face or via online discussion boards	Demo should provide hands on activities and assistance for trial	Introduction and Basic classes reduce complexity and speed adoption	Advanced trainings and demonstrations, allow for community building and increased relative advantage
Community Technology Showcase	Allows users a low risk way to investigate and become aware of innovation in the system	Generates a positive atmosphere about innovation.	Provides a place to discuss and find answers to questions			Community members can present to further integrate innovation for themselves
Technology Group						
Alter self conception from Tech assistants to 'Change Agents'	Tech. Coordinator uses terminology to frame activities	Resources available on website		Opportunity to use techniques and process in guiding change	Themselves and others see them as 'Change Agents'	Becomes a part of the tech team core processes