

“Teachers’ classroom practices reflect their own strengths and educational beliefs, which are tied directly to their personality types; asking teachers to change their classrooms means asking them to change—with spectacular success.”

Coaching Teachers for Change: Using the Concepts of Psychological Type to Reframe Teacher Resistance

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the experiences and reactions of a team of four 6th-grade teachers at an urban middle school as they adopted a learning styles methodology based on psychological type, the theory behind the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI®). The study tracks changes in the teachers’ core beliefs about education, classroom practices, and causes of student failure, as well as barriers to change in urban classrooms. Rather than being resistant, the teachers were hindered by feelings of helplessness, fears of student misbehavior, and their own habitual beliefs. The researcher shifted to coaching the teachers individually using techniques that met the needs of their psychological type preferences, and used a problem-solving approach aimed at reducing the number of failing students. As the teachers

reflected together on changes in student performance, using the framework of psychological type as a common language, they changed their beliefs about classroom practices and student failure. The qualitative data gathered over a 15-month period included teacher interviews and journals, student focus groups, observations, and student work. Key implications include the importance of critical reflection for teachers, considering the needs and concerns of teachers in designing staff development programs and school reform efforts, and the level of commitment by administrators, consultants, and teachers when changes are proposed.

INTRODUCTION

This study took place at Leivian Middle School¹, a grades 6–8 school in the heart of a large city. At the time

of the study, 58% of the students received free or reduced-cost lunches, a standard measure of poverty. The school was chosen because the principal asked me to introduce psychological type to her staff as a tool for team building and differentiating classroom instruction. After a general introduction to the whole staff, a team of four 6th-grade teachers volunteered to learn more about type and to use it in their classrooms. Although the initial study design involved helping teachers plan differentiated lessons and determining whether using type for differentiation affected student achievement, after 5 months of voluntarily meeting with me and working on lesson plans, none of the four teachers had put to use in their classrooms any of the differentiated lessons we worked together to plan. My focus therefore shifted to investigating barriers to change in an urban classroom.

METHOD

The initial design involved gathering data from teachers, students, and my observations, and then examining it for evidence of beliefs about education, student success and engagement, and attitudes toward the use of type in the classroom. However, the focus of my study shifted to understanding how the four teachers with whom I was working responded to change. That shift caused significant changes to my methodology. I went from being an outside facilitator to being an active presence in the classrooms of the four teachers with whom I was working. The following are descriptions of specific sources of data that were used in my study:

- Classroom observation. During the first week of school, I spent approximately 30 minutes in each classroom as the teachers taught typical lessons. For the rest of the year, all four teachers gave me permission to observe their classrooms at any time. Most of these observations took place during the third and fourth quarters, as I worked with the teachers individually to plan differentiated lessons and implement new strategies.
- Teacher interviews. I conducted four sets of 30-minute interviews with the teachers during the course of the study. The first set, conducted before school began, centered on their views of themselves as teachers and the difficulties they faced at Leivian Middle School. The second set of interviews was conducted in April 2003, examining teacher beliefs about why students fail. During

the last few weeks of school, I conducted the third set of interviews to discuss what the teachers believed we both did and did not accomplish with the use of type. The following fall I did one last round of interviews, asking different questions of each teacher about my role in their classrooms.

- Team meeting notes and transcriptions. Between August 2002 and June 2003, I met with the team 18 times.
- Teacher journals. The teachers each provided four journal entries about the results of certain exercises, lesson plans, and interventions at different times during the study.
- Student focus groups. I met three times each with four different student focus groups that ranged in size from five to seven students: one with high-achieving students, one an African American group, one an Asian American group, and one of students the teachers identified as at-risk. The focus group discussions covered their opinions of their 6th-grade classes, what they were learning about psychological type, and their reactions and degrees of success with assignments and classroom activities that were planned using type concepts.
- MBTI best-fit preferences for all staff at Leivian.
- MMTIC® best-fit type for all students assigned to the teaching team in this study.
- Student grades, both on specific assignments and overall quarterly grades. This information was used to help the teachers evaluate the effectiveness of the different strategies and lesson plans we adopted.

I encoded the above data in several phases. Initially, I coded data using the lens of psychological type, looking at how the needs of the different learning styles were being met or excluded by teaching methods and content, as well as evidence that supported or contradicted the teachers' self-reported strengths and areas for growth. In this phase, I also looked for evidence of student engagement, both during observations and in the student focus group data.

In the next phase, as my role changed from facilitator to coach, I looked for evidence of the teachers' beliefs about education and coded for teacher

attitudes toward planning, teacher-student relationships, disconnects between practices and espoused beliefs, teacher habits, labeling of students, and student frustrations. I also looked for factors that kept teachers from trying new methodologies in their classrooms, coding for administrative concerns, team dynamics, influence of policies and standardized tests, time constraints, expectations for students, type understanding, and fears.

The third phase began when the team agreed to focus on reducing the number of failing students. I first coded the data concerning why teachers believed students failed, what strategies the teachers had tried in the past, and their views of student attitudes. The data were coded for factors teachers could control, school or district policies, societal factors, and teacher expectations. These data were then compared with data collected during the fourth quarter through classroom observations, teacher interviews, student focus groups, and student work, as the team tried new strategies to reduce student failure rates.

Finally, I reviewed the data from all phases of the project, tracking changes in the teachers' self-described strengths and areas for growth, attitudes toward type, expectations for students, teacher-student relationships, team relationships, attitudes toward lesson planning, attitudes toward new methodologies, beliefs about why students fail, and classroom practices.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following charts summarize the strengths and educational beliefs of the teachers, gathered from interviews and classroom observations, compared with information on the general learning style of people of their type (Kise & Johnson, 1998).

Sara—ESTP

Strengths as a teacher

- Making math fun while teaching basic skills.
- Breaking tasks into steps.
- Patience, multiple methods, so students can discover concepts.
- Using and supplementing curriculum.
- Building relationships.

Education beliefs—these match teacher strengths

- Basic skills are key to success.
- Students need to enjoy school.
- Children need multiple explanations to learn.
- Good curriculum is a key.

Learns best when atmosphere

- includes direct payoff.
- includes practical applications.
- includes realistic expectations.
- is tied to interests.

Sara said that she preferred an active classroom and that her low-level math class, which was filled with quiet students, frustrated her. She wanted students to interact with her. She also expected students to come to her for help, rather than her seeking out students who needed help. When asked which students she had the most trouble teaching, Sara said:

The quiet student. The quiet, withdrawn student. I don't connect with that type of student whatsoever. That's one thing I have to tell myself. And, one of the reasons is I'm hard of hearing and I have a hearing aid. And, one of the reasons I got a hearing aid is because of my job. If it was up to me, I'd just go on reading lips. But, I have really quiet students and a huge population of them, and I would ask "What?" because I didn't hear. Well, that scares them into thinking that they got the answer wrong, so they don't answer. So, it's a quiet student. (8/28/2002)

Sara's hearing problem probably influenced her description of an ideal classroom, where eager students weren't afraid to ask questions. Students who came to her for help received it. She said that she often equated quietness with a lack of enthusiasm about math, but she acknowledged that many of her Hmong students were naturally quiet.

Mia—ESFP

Strengths as a teacher

- Being organized.
- Building relationships.
- Theatrical background, reading aloud.
- Basic skills.

Education beliefs—these match teacher strengths

- Structure and organization foster school success.
- Students who struggle need individual help.
- Reading aloud is necessary with mixed-ability classes.
- Students need basic skills practice.

Learns best when atmosphere

- is harmonious.
- includes a personal connection with teachers.

- includes minimal independent reading, quiet study.
- allows for building relationships while learning.

Mia, who valued structure and organization, felt most helpless with students who struggled in this area. When asked about the characteristics of students she struggled most to help, she said, “Oh, God, um, extremely disorganized, like oh my Lord. Especially this one. You know I made him a take-home folder and a bring-back folder. It didn’t help! So, yeah, extremely disorganized” (4/7/2003).

Kay—INFP

Strengths as a teacher

- Creativity, adding art, drama to lessons.
- Loving children.
- Generating inclusive classroom discussions.
- Student reflection exercises.
- Focusing team on big picture.

Education beliefs—these match teacher strengths

- Curriculum needs to be engaging and relevant to students.
- Teachers need to treat students as individuals.
- Students need hope, to believe in themselves, before they can learn.
- Children learn best in heterogeneous group settings.
- Students need to read and write.
- Teachers play the major role in whether students succeed or fail.

Learns best when atmosphere

- includes the arts—writing, music, etc.
- rewards creativity.
- includes a personal connection with teachers.
- values the subject.

Apathetic students were the hardest for Kay to deal with. She said that she was more effective with students who sometimes had behavior problems, as long as they engaged in learning some of the time, than with apathetic students.

It’s like, whatever, whatever, whatever the whole time. They may not be saying it, but it’s the way they sit, they turn away, you know. And I’ve seen those particular kids be cajoled by other kids and not respond to the other kids. So it’s not just the adults, it’s also peers who are friends who can’t

get through to them in certain ways . . . I guess I think apathy is probably the worst. (4/7/2003)

Given Kay’s beliefs that she was creating a classroom in which students could express themselves as individuals and that it was her responsibility to engage them in ways that helped them grow, her frustration with apathetic students or those who were afraid of failure isn’t surprising.

Pete—ENTP

Strengths as a teacher

- Active style.
- Strong science background.
- Using learning styles framework.
- Curriculum balance between engagement and challenge.
- Building relationships.

Education beliefs—these match teacher strengths

- Children need to actively participate to learn.
- Students have different learning styles.
- Student engagement will lead to success.
- Learning starts with respect.
- Knowing students as individuals is important.
- Students need to take responsibility for work and grades.

Learns best when atmosphere

- includes studying concepts, not facts.
- includes interesting subjects, worth digging deeper.
- includes teachers who allow for debate.
- includes an audience for opinions, theories.

Pete, who created units that used hands-on activities to teach big concepts, believed that these would keep his students engaged. When asked which students he struggled the most with, Pete said:

Ones with short attention spans? I think, I’m so conceptually oriented that if I’m trying to explain a concept to somebody—I’ve been known to get into long conceptual descriptions of things . . . when I get excited about something and they’re not quite staying with me, I’m like, “Come on, this is [laugh].” (9/4/2002)

In a journal entry about learning styles, he acknowledged,

I feel like it’s most important to come up with the

cool and creative thing that the kids will engage in most, but I think I have to realize that no matter how cool and creative it might be, it may be equally frustrating if they don't know the steps involved in it. (3/2003)

All four teachers struggled to comprehend the needs of the students who frustrated them the most. Sara said, "In the world, you need all types, I understand that, but they just crack me up and I just sit back and think wow, you're so quiet!" (8/28/2003). Pete commented that he hated to read instructions aloud, because it would upset him as a student if the directions were right in front of him. Kay looked at suggested activities for students who feel uncomfortable with unstructured projects and said, "Now I see that while I've given choices in the past, they've all been ones that meet my need to be creative. It's hard for me to believe someone would want to do these." (10/10/2002) Mia didn't think that students could stay on task without her guidance and structure. As important as the teachers' strengths were to their efforts to help students learn, those same strengths could be viewed as barriers to learning for students who were very different from the teachers.

In summary, the teachers' strengths and beliefs as educators could be directly linked to their own learning styles; they were unaware that their beliefs were largely the result of how *they* learned. As I worked with them to differentiate lesson plans based on personality types and learning styles, the activities and methods suggested for students whose style was opposite to theirs did not make sense to them. Although they continued to meet with me and plan lessons, their failure to use them in the classroom indicated that they did not believe that using type concepts would lead to greater student achievement. Yet each of them wanted to help all their students succeed; in this urban setting, as high as 25–35% of their students consistently failed major projects, and the level of students who received Ds and Fs was unacceptably high, according to the teachers.

I conducted another set of interviews to understand why the teachers believed their students failed. Only two of the teachers mentioned any factors that were within the control of the teachers:

- Pete (ENTP) admitted that some of his assignments were too big for students to persevere and succeed with. He felt that he's tried every possible method for providing directions. Different

methods worked better with different students, but overall the same number of students failed regardless of which method he used.

- Kay (INFP) felt that she should be offering more help or breaking down assignments into more manageable steps for her English Language Learner students. Yet she also stated that the help she did give used up her available time, including before and after school and during lunch hour.

Every other factor mentioned, as listed below, was outside of the teachers' control:

- Chaotic home lives
- District automatic promotion policies
- Increasing class sizes
- Perfectionism, resulting in students giving up on projects
- Homes that don't value education or insist on homework completion
- Student apathy, having lost hope that they can succeed in school

In separate interviews, each teacher named the percentage of students he or she believed would fail no matter what strategies were used. The teachers' estimates ranged from 10–25%. During the third quarter of the year of the study, 20% of the team's students received Fs in Social Studies; 18% in Mathematics; 16% in Language Arts; and 23% in Science, in spite of an amusement park trip incentive for students who received a D- or higher in all their classes.

In viewing the data, one possible conclusion was that because the teachers believed they were doing everything they could to help students succeed, they had no incentive to change their classroom practices. The shared resistance to change could be described in terms of learned helplessness, defined by Seligman (1998) as ". . . the giving-up reaction, the quitting response that follows from the belief that whatever you do doesn't matter" (p. 15). His research with laboratory dogs showed that when the subjects had no control over shocks they received, they soon stopped trying and simply lay down once they realized their actions, such as jumping to get away, were futile. When helplessness in people was studied, the biggest factor contributing to it was a lack of hope.

Whether or not we have hope depends on two dimensions of our explanatory style: pervasiveness and permanence. Finding temporary and specific causes for misfortune is the art of hope: Temporary causes limit helplessness in time, and specific causes limit helplessness to the original situation. On the other hand, permanent causes produce helplessness far into the future, and universal causes spread helplessness through all your endeavors. Finding permanent and universal causes for misfortune is the practice of despair. (Seligman, 1998, p. 48)

Most of the causes the teachers listed for student failure were permanent and universal: home situations, the automatic promotion policy, large class sizes, and failure to value education. The teachers felt helpless. Further, changes meant working on skills or curriculum content outside of their normal practices or beliefs. Why make the effort?

In addition, the environment in which the teachers worked made the prospect of changing seem risky for several reasons. First, the teachers worried about how students would behave or perform if they altered their current practices. Second, the district had set a goal that 70% of 8th-graders would pass the state's basic standards test in math and reading by 2005; the scores at Leivian were above the district average, but still below the goal. Further, because the team's current students had had lower 5th-grade scores than previous classes, the teachers were worried about whether overall test results would drop for these 6th-graders, compared with previous years. It was easier to defend their curriculum if they emphasized basic skills and traditional teacher-centered classrooms.

Simultaneously, I adopted three strategies to overcome the teachers' expectations that students would fail no matter what they did:

- I applied a problem-solving methodology to create evidence that contradicted their beliefs about how students learn and why they fail.
- I coached each of them in their own learning style.
- I provided evidence that contradicted teacher beliefs about why students fail.

Problem Solving. Because all four teachers expressed a desire to have fewer students fail, I suggested that we set a tangible goal for the fourth quarter of reducing the number of Fs students received.

TABLE 1 (SEE PAGE 53) parallels the problem-solving methodologies of John Dewey (1910/1997) and Isabel Myers (1998). Myers added to Dewey's framework by pointing out how the natural strengths of psychological preferences are useful at varying steps of the process and added questions to examine when completing the steps that are less natural.

The strategies the teachers agreed to adopt to reduce the number of Fs were:

1. For class time, students set their own written goals for what they would accomplish so that they could cross them off (and remember what they were). Teachers first listed their requirements on the board, and students then added to their lists when working on assignments spread out over several days.
2. Students completed step sheets for assignments, listing everything that needed to be done and how long each step would take.
3. For long assignments (even those due in a week) teachers helped them plan backward and fill out written calendars, which parents signed. Teachers monitored progress by assigning mini-deadlines.
4. Teachers required that students complete missing assignments, either over lunch hour or before or after school. They adopted a "no excuses" policy.

Coaching. The following charts summarize the coaching style (Hirsh & Kise, 2000) and strategies used for each teacher. The strategies were used both to help the teachers try differentiating lesson plans and to implement the "No More Fs" strategies.

Sara—ESTP

Motivation: Having autonomy to accomplish things their way while getting the most out of life.

Remember: ESTPs tend to discount theories, concepts, and unproven activities that don't appear to have practical use.

- Flexible, talkative, enthusiastic, entertaining coach who delivers a straight message.
 - Provide hands-on skill development; let them try it out in real time. Outdoor activities favored.
 - Use relevant subject matter that applies directly to one of their interests/needs.
 - Concentrate on immediate development with a tangible pay-off.
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Table 1. Comparison of Dewey's and Myers' Problem-Solving Frameworks.

Dewey (1910/1997, p. 72)	Myers (1998, p. 36)	Action Steps
<p>1. Location and definition of a problem, make observations to define it (Steps 1 and 2 of Dewey's model).</p>	<p>Define the problem (Sensing function):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ What are the facts? ■ What has worked in the past? ■ What resources are available? 	<p>I interviewed teachers to determine their beliefs on why students fail and what strategies they had tried to reduce failures. Classroom observations indicated other reasons students failed, including lack of teacher attention to type as a framework for teaching and learning as well as low teacher expectations.</p>
<p>2. Suggestion of possible solutions, suspending judgment while inference goes on.</p>	<p>Consider the possibilities (Intuitive function):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ What other ways are there to look at this? ■ What do the data imply? ■ What are connections to larger issues or other people? ■ What theories address this kind of problem? ■ What are all the possible ways to approach the problem? 	<p>Although ideally the teachers would have joined in generating alternatives, they did not believe any strategies would help students succeed. I developed the strategies, based on type information and literature of working with students of poverty.</p>
<p>3. Determining the implications of each suggested solution.</p>	<p>Weigh the consequences (Thinking function):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ What are the pros and cons of each possibility? ■ What are the logical consequences of each? ■ What are the consequences of not deciding/acting? ■ Would this option apply equally and fairly to everyone? <p>Understand the impact on people (Feeling function):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ How does each alternative fit with values? ■ How will the people involved be affected? ■ How will each option contribute to harmony and positive interactions? 	<p>I met with each teacher individually and then as a team to discuss the proposed strategies. I asked the teachers to critique the strategies, provide suggestions for altering them, and express their opinions as to whether they would work in their classrooms with their students and upcoming assignments. The teachers agreed to try the strategies as I had written them, although they expressed doubts their usefulness.</p>
<p>4. Further observation and experimentation leading to acceptance or rejection, that is, the conclusion of belief or disbelief.</p>	<p>Make a final decision, act on it, and evaluate the results.</p>	<p>Teachers gathered fourth-quarter data on both individual assignments and overall grades to determine whether the strategies helped students succeed.</p>

Sara first tried a differentiated lesson plan when I handed her a ready-made one for the reading class she taught—as listed above, she responded when my assistance met her direct need. For “No More Fs,” Sara immediately saw the practical use of the theoretical concepts. She asked me to help her think through how to best apply the strategies in her room. We looked at the student planners to determine where the students would write to-do lists, check off items, and record homework assignments. She posted daily to-do lists and gave points when students copied down the information.

Mia—ESFP

Motivation: Adding warmth, excitement, and fun to work and leisure, enjoying the richness of family, friends, the real world.

Remember: ESFPs prefer to avoid theory, quiet reading/reflection, and nonessential intellectual arguments.

- Warm, responsive, friendly coach who wants to build a relationship with them.
- Hands-on, try out and revise as needed skill development, preferably in action-oriented group setting.
- Concrete tasks that allow for exploration, fun, and personal understanding.
- Variety of methods to increase involvement in the learning process, with rewards of praise when practice is perfected or nearly so.

To get Mia to have students read on their own rather than her reading aloud, I used these coaching tips to plan my work with her:

- We started with a concrete task, designing stations where students read primary sources to investigate background information.
- I spent several days in her classroom, helping her revise her instructions and working directly with students.
- I offered constant positive feedback, relaying evidence of student engagement and praise for experimenting outside of her comfort zone.

The payoff was significant for the students, as shown in **TABLE 2.** (SEE BELOW.)

Mia chose to use the same methods for the next round of projects. When I agreed to be present, she then willingly used the “No More Fs” strategies for a major project, the results of which are shown in **TABLE 3.** (SEE PAGE 55.) She also talked extensively with other teachers about her changed perspectives on why students failed.

Kay—INFP

Motivation: Adding to human understanding, sharing knowledge and enthusiasm for deep passions, upholding meaning and mastery.

Remember: INFPs generally want to know the larger intent, purpose, and value of the materials being taught as they relate to human aspirations.

- Intelligent yet empathic coach who emphasizes harmony, values, and integrity.
- Provide opportunities for creativity, deep exploration of topics, originality of expression, and novel ideas.

Table 2. Comparison of Student Grades on Two Language Arts Assignments.

	Worksheet packet not designed using type	Worksheet packet designed using type
Number of students who failed to complete the assignment	15	6
% of students who received an “F”	26%	8%
% of students who received >75%	58%	70%
% of students who received >85%	32%	55%
% of students who received >95%	9%	36%

- Be flexible, allow for judgments on the value and meaning of materials or exercises.
- Establish a noncompetitive, collegial learning environment with plenty of time for reflection.

To help Kay differentiate a lesson plan, I reviewed the ideas she'd created on her own to meet her needs for deep processing and collegial discussion. Kay embraced the "No F" initiative but told me, "There are always holes in my own plans, and I'm going to help these kids plan their projects? I wish I weren't learning this at the same time I'm teaching it" (4/10/2003). On the first big project on which she was going to use the technique, Kay planned out several assignments that the students could choose from, then asked me to check whether at least one fit the needs of each quadrant of the type table. She asked me to join her for the first 2 days of using the strategies, whereas usually she proceeded independently.

Consistent with the INFP drive to understand the "larger intent, purpose and value of the materials being taught" (Hirsh & Kise, 2000, p. 37)—here the planning strategies—Kay internalized the long-term hope of our effort. When Mia worried that student enthusiasm wouldn't lead to more completion, Kay said,

It breaks down because they don't know how to visualize the steps to get there. And that's what we're helping them learn—to keep that excitement in the future longer and longer in their lives because they'll have met with success. Maybe you had to kneel with those boys for ages . . . the next time you might have to kneel 5 minutes less with them because they have a little more self-confidence. (4/12/2003)

The first time using the strategies, Kay saw the number of Fs students received drop from approximately 30% to 18%. The next year, using type to differentiate the lesson and using the "No More Fs" strategies, 100% of her students received a C or better.

Pete—ENTP

Motivation: Setting sights on the winning edge, having an impact, then going on to something new.

Remember: ENTPs generally like to challenge or debate; offer novel and creative, open-ended methods that they can improve upon.

- Inventive, resourceful, intelligent coach who can hold his or her own ground.
- Offer ideas for them to challenge, evaluate, or debunk. Use high standards, set up competition with self or others.
- Provide case studies, critical analysis, and logical models or systems.

Pete benefited from a totally different style of coaching. He had been developing lesson plans that took into account brain research and other learning style models for years and had been instrumental in convincing other team members to work with me. At any team meeting, Pete related type concepts to everything from outcome-based education to cognitive coaching strategies. His questions for me often began with "But what about . . . ?" or "What if . . . ?" with his preference for debate as the ENTP coaching suggestions indicate. He was very skeptical of the "No More Fs" strategies, and worried that they provided crutches rather than skills to students. However, when he saw

Table 3. Results on Student Projects When "Abandon All Fs" Strategies Were Used.

Number of students who failed to complete the assignment	2
Number of students who did not complete their initial project but received a "C" or better on the open book test (9 students took the test).	3
% of students who received an "F"	4%
% of students who received an "D"	12%
% of students who received an "C"	21%
% of students who received an "B"	28%
% of students who received an "A"	35%

the results, he advocated successfully for teaching them to all students the next fall.

Providing Evidence. Mia was the first to try the “No More Fs” strategies for a major project. **TABLE 3.** (SEE PAGE 55) shows student results on the project, compared with common noncompletion rates greater than 20% on former projects.

The “No More Fs” effort had three major effects on the teachers’ thinking. First, it showed them that their own educational beliefs were sufficient to foster success in all students. Second, it showed them that their beliefs about why students fail were incomplete or incorrect. Third, the teachers found that adopting different educational beliefs could help more students succeed. The teachers agreed to teamwide use of the strategies and presented them to the rest of the school’s staff.

With evidence from the 6th-grade team that the strategies worked, the 7th-grade team used them for science fair projects and experienced a completion rate of 94%, in spite of the fact that in the quarter before the science fair, a high percentage of students failed science. The 8th-grade team used the strategies for History Day, with a 98% completion rate.

CONCLUSION

What began as a study of introducing a learning styles methodology became a study of the process of changing teacher beliefs and classroom practices. As such, the analysis of the difficulty of change for the four teachers at Leivian Middle School has implications for those involved in school reform. As Fullan (1993) noted, it is much harder to change what actually goes on inside classrooms—instructional practices and the nature of what is being taught—than to introduce new curriculum or new school structures. Because it is the teachers who are asked to make fundamental changes in their practices and habitual beliefs, lack of attention to their needs may keep them from implementing the reform measures.

First, a neutral framework was essential to helping teachers rethink their educational beliefs. Although other frameworks are possible, in this study psychological type served as a common, neutral language for discussing current practices and proposed changes, allowing for reflection and collaboration. Instead of telling teachers what they were doing wrong, I (and their teammates) could frame comments in terms of which students new practices would reach. Learning the framework of type took time. During the 9 months

that I worked with the teachers at Leivian, they moved slowly from understanding to experimentation to application. All four said that because they needed time to first understand the implications of psychological type theory for their own growth, they could not have moved faster to use type in lesson planning.

Second, the designers of staff development efforts need to begin with the learning styles, needs, and interests of the teachers, not the format that is easiest to use. In the literature on school change, the problem of resistance among teachers to change efforts is often described using taxonomies of teachers on a continuum from enthusiastic supporters of change to those who seem to work against it. Terms like “deadwood” and “laggards” label resistant teachers as deficient or even dangerous to change efforts.

The research on psychological type and change, however, points to definite circumstances, evidence, and procedures that different personality types need before they enter willingly into a change process. Before labeling teachers as resisters, people involved in staff development need first to consider the type of changes teachers are being asked to make and then determine the most effective training format. When the changes involve habitual beliefs and practices, the teachers may need considerable scaffolding, including being coached in their own learning styles, before they see evidence that the new ideas bring results, and they are willing to invest the time and effort, as well as take risks, to learn to use them. This is a far different problem than the label of resistance suggests.

A third implication for school reform is that attempts to change teaching practices without examining underlying assumptions and beliefs, as well as the societal pressures or beliefs in which the school is operating, may at best produce only restructuring rather than significant changes in classroom practices. What are the teachers’ fears about changes? What problems do they envision? Further, do they believe the changes can make a concrete difference in whether their students will be more successful? If not, the reform effort needs to provide evidence that will motivate teachers to change.

If these are the requirements for effective change efforts—time, long-term commitment, consistency, attention to individuals in the change process, and attention to systems and beliefs before requiring changes in practices—it is easy to see why so many school reform efforts fall short. And it is easy to under-

stand why some teachers have grown skeptical or even hostile toward reforms that take them from their daily work without adding to their ability to help students succeed. If these requirements aren't taken into account

when teachers are asked to change their beliefs, the most worthy of reform efforts may never truly be put to the test where it counts—in the classroom.

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¹ All proper names are pseudonyms.

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ISSN 0895-8750.