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Anyone who is involved in the business of education has an opinion about schools; not just the people who walk the campus every day, not just the teachers and students, custodians and cooks, or the substitute teacher we see once a week. Everyone from the district superintendent to the factory worker who drives by the neighborhood school on his way home from work has an opinion. Sometimes in the most minute of ways, each of these people holds a share in the development of our schools. They will all look to the principal to make changes where and when changes are needed.

Before a principal can begin making positive changes in a school, though, he or she first has to know the school. It is important to be familiar with the history and the culture of the campus. You don't have to know the name of every teacher who ever assigned homework; just be aware of the basics. Who are the students? The alumni? The neighborhood influences? Now, I'm not suggesting you dig through the school district archives trying to find the original blueprints, but knowing the campus boundaries can be a benefit to any leader who is hoping to implement change.

You might be asking why this is so important. Logical question. Let's pretend for a moment that you are principal of a low-performing campus, and your goal is to help the school turn a corner. You can suggest dozens of changes to reach your goals, but if your faculty has already waded its way through those particular swamps you don't want them drowning and gasping for air all over again. Knowing what changes have already been implemented, and what level of success they did or did not achieve, can not only keep you from duplicating what already hasn't worked, but it can also help you to build a positive reputation in the eyes of your scrutiny-minded mediocre teachers.

In Strategy One: Identify the Change, Whitaker (2009) notes three types of changes: procedural, structural, and cultural. When leaders strive to make changes that will positively impact the students, they will always look to the cultural before the procedural. While it might be important that the method for recording tardies be adjusted (procedural), it is more important that teachers engage their students in a manner that encourages them to make it to class on time (cultural).

Everyone wants to be part of a great school; let's get started making one.

What's Your Problem?

The first step in attempting to implement change is to determine exactly why a change is needed. What is the problem that requires an alteration or adjustment?

1. Allow each member of the leadership team, including yourself, to compile a list of the changes most needed in your school.

2. Using the individual lists from Step 1, find the common items and compile a master list. This list can be used throughout the *Implementation Guide*.

3. Review and adjust the Master List with the team and decide if you are focusing on a problem or on a symptom of a problem. If any of the listed items is a symptom, rewrite that item so that the team can focus on the actual problem.

Three Levels of Change

For the purposes of this *Implementation Guide*, the levels of change are procedural, structural, and cultural.

Procedural Change

A procedural change involves a very low-level or technical alteration.

1. Have each team member suggest, in the form of a list, procedural changes that might be implemented for the new school year. The list should include that team member's role.

2. In your implementation team, agree on a minimum of three procedural changes from the individual lists. The group does not need to be specific in describing the changes, but be sure that everyone is in agreement.

3. Changes that we attempt to implement might be refurbished ideas from previous years. If any of the procedural changes the team considers has been previously attempted, discuss why the change did or did not meet with success.
