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Apply knowledge of learning

NSDC's learning standard reminds us to apply our knowledge of human learning and change when we plan or facilitate professional learning. This standard encourages teacher leaders or coaches to know about and apply their knowledge of how adults learn and how change impacts them.

What is learning?

Learning is a process of change. Learning can be accidental, unanticipated, and unplanned. Another term used to describe this kind of learning is informal learning. For example, I had an unexpected learning moment after a rather casual conversation over lunch where my guest expressed a point of view very different from my own. I listened carefully, probed her thinking, and shared my own views. I left the conversation with a different perspective.

Sometimes learning is planned and purposeful. This occurs when the learner intentionally engages in an experience in which some change is the expected outcome. That outcome is frequently a change in a KASAB. A term used to describe this form of learning is formal learning. For example, I clearly recall the series of workshops I attended to learn coaching skills.

How we define learning depends on the outcome of the learning process. The KASAB model provides a useful framework for thinking about different kinds of learning. This model identifies five different kinds of changes that occur as a result of learning or some intervention. (See chart on p. 8.)

Sadly, much of the professional development teachers have experienced focuses on transferring knowledge and developing skills. Informational or demonstrative learning focuses on the facts, principles, or concepts. It is what a learner knows about. Operational or procedural learning focuses on the learner's know-how, the capacity to do.

However, deep learning, often called transformational learning, occurs at the level of beliefs, values, and motivation rather than only at the level of knowledge and skills. Transformational learning is long-term and results in behavioral changes. Transformational learning is deep change that occurs at the core of the learner. Learning at this level promotes a change in practice.

How we learn

Cognitive psychologists for decades have been exploring how learning occurs. From the work of Vygotsky, Piaget, Kolb, Luria, Freire, Knowles, Kegan, and others, we have learned that there are processes that support learning, yet not all adults or students learn in the same way. Some are whole-to-part learners and others are part-to-whole learners. Some learn best by jumping in and experimenting through a hands-on approach; others learn best by hearing about or observing. Some want theory and research; others want practical. Some want time to think about, process, draw pictures of, or reconstruct what they learn; others seem to just get it.

Multiple factors affect how we learn as adults. Our need to learn is one. When adults express a desire or understand the reason for learning, they are more open to learning. Sometimes when learners perceive that they have little choice in learning or when the learning doesn't appear relevant to their particular situa-

LEARNING
Staff development that improves the learning of all students applies knowledge about human learning and change.
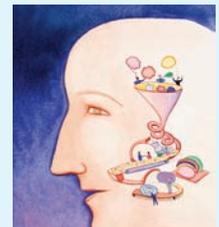
For more information about NSDC's Standards for Staff Development, see www.nsdc.org/ standards/ index.cfm

tion, they seem less willing to engage in the learning process.

Another factor that affects how we learn is our sense of efficacy. Efficacy is our confidence that we know how to teach and that we make a difference. A high level of efficacy often means that learners are more confident that what they are learning will strengthen their practice and give them more options. A low level of efficacy often means that a learner is less confident and less willing to examine his or her practice and

Development Laboratory studied how teachers experienced the implementation of new science curriculum. Led by Bill Rutherford, Gene Hall, Shirley Hord, and Susan Loucks-Horsley, the development of the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) (see Hall & Hord, 2000) provided educational leaders with a practical theory to guide the implementation of change efforts in education.

The research has four key components. The first is Stages of Concern. (See chart on p. 9.)

KASAB MODEL		
TYPE OF CHANGE	**DEFINITION**	**TEACHER EXAMPLE**
Knowledge	Conceptual understanding of information, theories, principles, and research.	Teachers understand mathematical concepts they teach.
Attitude	Beliefs about the value of particular information or strategies.	Teachers believe students' competence in mathematics is important to their success, both within and beyond school.
Skill	The ability to use strategies and processes to apply knowledge.	Teachers know how to employ a variety of instructional strategies to help students visualize mathematical concepts.
Aspiration	Desires, or internal motivation, to engage in a particular practice.	Teachers want their students to understand and perform well in mathematics.
Behavior	Consistent application of knowledge and skills.	Teachers consistently employ inquiry-based instructional practices in mathematics to help students acquire a deep understanding of math concepts.

Source: adapted from *Assessing Impact: Evaluating Staff Development*, by Joellen Killion. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2008.

consider alternative approaches. A learner with low efficacy often looks outside of himself or herself for the reason for problems rather than considering what he or she can do to address the problem.

Certainly other factors affect how people learn. Time, resources, expectations, and the culture in which the learning occurs influence learning. One other important consideration is how learners experience learning.

How do learners experience learning?

Learning is a process of change. When individuals engage in either informal or formal learning, they respond in different ways. In landmark research in the 1970s and '80s, a team of researchers at the Southwest Educational

Other key components include Levels of Use, Innovation Configuration Maps, and change facilitators. Of particular interest to coaches is Stages of Concern. Stages of Concern identifies seven stages of responses learners have in a change initiative. Knowing a learner's stage of concern helps the change facilitator identify the most appropriate intervention or action to support the learner. For example, if a learner expresses a management concern, indicating that he or she doesn't know how to find the necessary resources to implement the new instructional processes, a coach can zero in on this need and address the concern with the hope of removing barriers to implementation.

Change challenges everyone. Any form of professional development requires change.

Transformational learning, change that occurs at the level of beliefs, aspirations, and behaviors, reconfigures how learners think and act. When teacher leaders and coaches clarify the types of change they expect and teachers want as a result of professional learning, use their knowledge of how various factors influence learning, and are skillful in responding to learners as they experi- ence change, they will be more prepared to lead learning within their schools and districts.

Reference

Hall, G. & Hord, S. (2000). *Implementing Change: Patterns, Principles, and Potholes.* Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon. ◆

STAGES OF CONCERN

STAGES OF CONCERN	TYPICAL EXPRESSIONS OF CONCERN	TYPICAL COACH RESPONSE/INTERVENTION
6. Refocusing	"Perhaps if we thought about integrating this with our social studies program, we could accomplish more."	• As we think about how to adapt what we are learning, how do we ensure that we incorporate the essential features of these instructional strategies and not lose the essence? • Let's take some time to plan how we might do that.
5. Collaboration	"How can I learn about what others are doing?"	• In our next team meeting, let's take some time to hear how others are doing with implementing these strategies and how their students are doing. • I will be happy to take your class while you observe your colleagues to see how it is going in their classes.
4. Consequence	"How will this affect my classroom practice and my students?"	• If you implement these new strategies, how do you anticipate your students will respond? • I am willing, if it is helpful, to observe several students in your class when you teach these strategies to watch how they respond. This might help you understand more thoroughly how these strategies support student learning.
3. Management	"Where will I find the time to do this?"	• I am glad to help you make sense of this. When can we meet to discuss your questions? • I wonder if we could discuss this with other teachers who are asking the same questions you are? • Here are some strategies others have used.
2. Personal	"Wait! How can I possibly think about something new?"	• I understand your concern about how this will affect you. I wonder if you want to know what others have said about how it has impacted them. • Tell me how you think this will impact you. What are you anticipating? • What relationship do you see between this and your professional goals?
1. Information	"I'd like to know more about what that is."	• What do you want to know? • How can I help you with this? • Here are some resources to give you more information. • Please check the web site.
0. Awareness	"I heard about that."	• What have you heard? • What are you interested in knowing? • I can provide more information if you'd like or share some resources that would help you know more.