

FINAL PROJECT

Introduction: Throughout this semester we will explore organizational theory through the lens of managing change. As we unpack key concepts, a theoretical foundation upon which change theory could be understood and applied will emerge. Education leaders who possess the intellectual knowledge of the change process and the skill-set to produce change are capable of transforming school districts. I've designed this project to help you develop the skills to translate theory into practice.

Background: The change process in human systems is complex. Throughout the semester we explore the complexity of change and the models developed to understand it. Kurt Lewin famously said, *"You Cannot Understand a System Until You Try to Change It."* Lewin was instrumental in developing a model of processes that framed the exact variables that needed to be conceptualized and observed. Most work in organizational theory count Lewin's ideas among its foundational elements.

Specifically, Lewin identified the processes of unfreezing, changing, and refreezing as the foundational principles undergirding change. He acknowledged that human change was a profound psychological dynamic process requiring unlearning and relearning. As futurist and philosopher Alvin Toffler said, *"The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn."*

The ability to learn and unlearn is a 21st Century skill that we hope our high school graduates possess. People who fail to stay current with trends and innovations will be left behind in the global marketplace. Being a lifelong learner has never been more important. Mental models that embrace alternative realities and new paradigms must replace those that are not adaptable to new contexts.

The first concept is unfreezing. It refers to the human tendency towards stability in the face of a force field of driving and restraining forces, causing disequilibrium (see the Force Field Analysis Tool). Education leaders often experience the counterforce that is produced when a driving force for change is introduced. That counterforce is defensive and used to maintain equilibrium. Personal psychological defenses, group norms, or behaviors embedded in the organizational culture are all restraining forces. If change is to occur, the restraining forces that have been the driving forces in the system must be removed, facilitating the movement toward restoring equilibrium. The very system that created the problem cannot solve it. Unfreezing is basically three processes, each of which has to be present to some degree for readiness and motivation to change to be generated: Disconfirmation, Induction of Guilt or Survival Anxiety, and Creation of Psychological Safety or Overcoming of Learning Anxiety.

At the crux of change is some level of frustration or dissatisfaction with the current system, as evidenced by undesirable outcomes. Students chronically underperforming, graduating at low rates, misbehaving, or missing school regularly are all examples of disconfirming information. However, just because the data happens to point in a certain direction, it doesn't mean everyone goes that way. In education, as in most industries, we have learned that the targets of change have learned to ignore the information, dismiss it as irrelevant, blame the undesired outcome on external forces, or simply deny its validity.

Our primary responsibility (and moral imperative) as education leaders is to motivate our teams to continuously improve. Often that involves change. The change literature is clear:

connect the change to something the people care deeply about. Disconfirmation, then, if the data is valid and relevant, arouses the feeling of guilt that *not* changing will lead to failure. However, admitting that something needs to change (if the results are expected to change), impacts our self-esteem and with it produces defensive behavior. Often, not meeting performance standards may be more desirable than the loss of self-esteem by attributing outcomes to behaviors.

To change is to learn. With learning comes anxiety. It's a fundamental restraining force that becomes more forceful proportionally to the degree of disconfirmation. Managing change effectively, then, is a balancing act between the amount of threat produced by disconfirming data and the psychological safety that can thwart it. Collaboration, the cornerstone of organizational learning, creates parallel systems that can provide psychological safety. Managing learning in the PLC model, for example, provides the support to reduce learning anxiety, lower defensive barriers, and create the motivation to learn and subsequently change.

The motivated learner reframes the learning through a process of cognitive restructuring. That's no small task in education given its fierce independence exemplified by the isolationism that has historically characterized it. Individualism is deeply embedded in education. It's been a struggle implementing a high-functioning learning organization model in some school districts. The subordination of the individual to the group has left many PLCs for dead. Successful change managers redefine teamwork by redefining individualism to maintain its primacy status. Individuals are rewarded by being an effective member of a team. All this is possible when the learner becomes unfrozen. Unfreezing creates motivation to learn. But is not an end in itself.

New cycles of disconfirmation emerge if managing the learning ceases to exist at the same level that created the motivation to begin with, setting off new cycles of disconfirmation and unlearning the new learning, and thus the failure to refreeze.

Personal Change Project Assignment Submission Details

Week 1 (9/8): Choose a personal/professional change goal to work on for the next 16 weeks. Review the Change Curve schematic below and use it to measure your progress. Are you experiencing each stage along the path to change? Also review rubrics below.

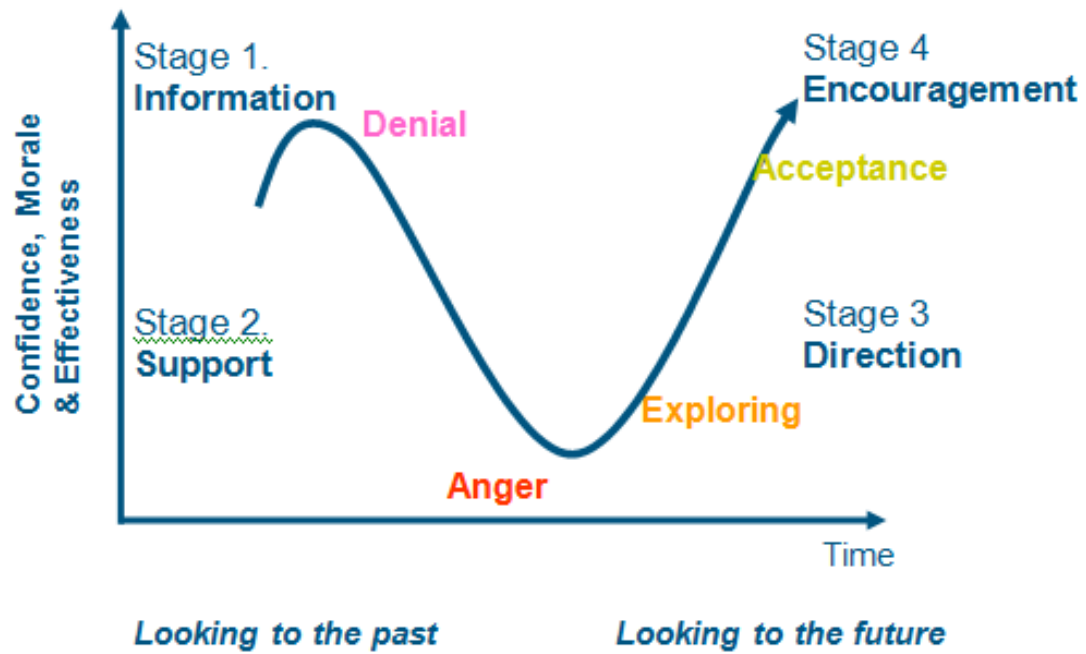
Week 2 (by 9/8): For Change Project Submission #1, identify your goal, the method to achieve it, and a system to monitor progress towards meeting the goal. Use the Force Field Analysis tool to complete the first step in the process.

Week 3 – 14 (Starting 9/22): Complete Change Project Submission #1 - #6. This is a weekly progress report of between 300-500 words. Include detailed outcomes and any reactions or thoughts about the change process.

Week 16 (Due 12/7):

- Change Project Submission #7. This is your final paper of about 1,000 words minimum and about 2,000 words maximum with the outcome of the change process and your thoughts and reactions to it.
- Report final outcomes.
- 20 minutes per student.

The Change Curve



EXPECTATIONS FOR THE PROJECT			
Criteria	A	B	C/NO PASS
Process	Identified a variety of salient points about their process. Shared real insights into the problems of resistance to change. Provided ample evidence of the constant planning and re-planning process of change.	Identified some salient points about their process. Shared some insights into the problems of resistance to change. Provided some evidence of the constant planning and re-planning process of change.	Did not identify salient points about the process or share their insights into the problems of resistance to change in a convincing manner. Provided little evidence of the constant planning and re-planning process of change.
Learnings	Identified the major learnings gained from doing the project by connecting it to concrete evidence and persuasive support based on the course content.	Identified some learnings gained from doing the project. Connected it to some concrete evidence and persuasive support based on the course content.	Failed to identify learnings gained from doing the project. Few examples of concrete evidence. Persuasive support based on the course content not evident.
Use of the literature	The writer consistently refers to the relevant literature to credit scholarly sources and support arguable assertions.	The writer cites relevant literature in most instances; one or more arguable assertions may be unsupported.	The writer does not cite relevant literature and/or fails to adequately credit sources.
Conformance to APA	No or almost no significant APA errors Citations and reference pages adhere to APA guidelines.	Some APA errors, but they are not consistent.	Frequent/consistent APA errors.

WRITING STANDARDS FOR FINAL ASSIGNMENT					
DOMAIN	A	B	C	D	F
Logic & Organization	Develops ideas cogently, organizes them logically in paragraphs, connects them with effective transitions; clear and logically consistent organization relating all ideas together	Develops unified and coherent ideas within paragraphs with generally adequate transitions; clear overall organization relating most ideas together	Develops and organizes ideas in paragraphs that are not necessarily connected with transitions; some overall organization, but some ideas may seem illogical and/or unrelated	Does not develop ideas cogently, organize them logically within paragraphs or connect them with clear transitions; uneven or ineffective overall organization	Does not develop ideas cogently, organize them logically within paragraphs and connect them with clear transitions; uneven and ineffective overall organization
Evidence	Ample, relevant, concrete evidence and persuasive support for every debatable assertion; uses multiple, reliable sources which are assessed critically; maintains own voice	Relevant, concrete evidence and persuasive support for most debatable assertions; uses multiple or reliable sources but not always assessed critically	Merely adequate evidence and support for most assertions; uses single or multiple sources, which may be unreliable and used uncritically	Weak evidence and persuasive support; uses limited source(s) and/or relies predominantly on generalizations, narration, description, or summary	Little or no evidence or support connected to essay's topic or claim, relies solely on author's experiences, questionable sources; outside the genre of academic prose
Citations	Researched support quoted, cited, paraphrased, and well-integrated into prose	Researched support correctly quoted, cited, and paraphrased	Researched support adequately quoted, cited, and paraphrased	Researched support incorrectly quoted, cited, and paraphrased	Researched support incorrectly quoted, cited, and paraphrased
Control of Language	Exact control of language, including effective word choice and sentence variety; superior facility with the conventions of standard written English	Clear and effective control of language, including word choice and sentence variety; competence with the conventions of standard written English	Intermittent control of language, including word choice and sentence variety; minor errors in standard written English	Intermittent control of language, word choice, or sentence variety; major errors in standard written English impeding understanding	Poor control of language, includes problems with word choice and sentence structure; frequent errors in standard written English
Analysis	Sophisticated and complex	Shows understanding of interrelationships, thoughtful	Shows a grasp of course content	Presents only facts, parrots textbook, logical fallacies	No analysis