

Administrator Tips for Supporting PBLA Implementation

In many programs across the country, the implementation of PBLA continues as a long-term change initiative. As such, it is normal for a program to experience ups and downs during the process as teachers experience success or encounter frustration.

A number of strategies actively support change, several of which are discussed below and in the *PBLA Accountability* section of PG.

Managing Change

Systemic change is complex and long term. The literature on change management, especially in the context of education (Fullan 2006, 2010), provides considerable insight for the implementation of PBLA. The following key themes emerge:

- What needs to change in classroom practice and service provider organization (SPO) culture, and what it will take to achieve the changes must be clearly articulated and shared with all staff.
- Continuous learning among staff must be embraced and not isolated within individual SPOs. Instead, it should be collaborative across SPOs and jurisdictions.
- Change activities must focus simultaneously on changing teacher practice and changing the culture and system within which teachers work.
- Motivation to engage long term in the individual and collective effort to change is critical, as is effective leadership.
- Capacity building that focuses on results and embeds “positive pressure” is essential.
- Learning must occur in, or be applied to, local and larger contexts.
- Reflective action must be built in: teachers and other stakeholders need to engage in purposeful thinking about what they are doing.
- “Permeable connectivity” (Fullan, 2006) must be fostered: strategies that promote engagement, mutual interaction, and influences across all levels of responsibility must be pursued.

The Implementation Dip

Often when implementing change, your program may experience an implementation dip, when confidence and competence dip for a period of time. This might be due to several important factors:

- Real change takes time. Give your program a minimum of 1 ½ - 2 years to adjust.
- Complex change frequently causes early disequilibrium and anxiety, resulting in a loss of confidence for teachers ("Am I doing this right?").

It is important to find ways to acknowledge and address challenges, celebrate small successes, and encourage teachers to keep on trying – particularly in the early stages of implementation. This will help prevent negative change (abandoning the process entirely or implementing it in a superficial manner that does not engage learners in their own learning). Below are some suggestions administrators have found helpful for building support and dealing with resistance.

Strategies that Support Change

Some strategies to build support include

- Urging classroom teachers to take risks, experiment, reflect and try again.
- Creating space for imperfections, recognizing that change in practice takes time.
- Encouraging teachers to share their successes at workshops or meetings and share resources they've developed on Tutela.
- Offering to meet one-on-one or in small groups with teachers to discuss PBLA-related topics or to find solutions to challenges.
- Ensuring teachers have the resources they need, scheduling time for training sessions or for teachers to collaborate.
- Encouraging curiosity and excitement about engaging in the change while recognizing and acknowledging teachers' fear and frustration.

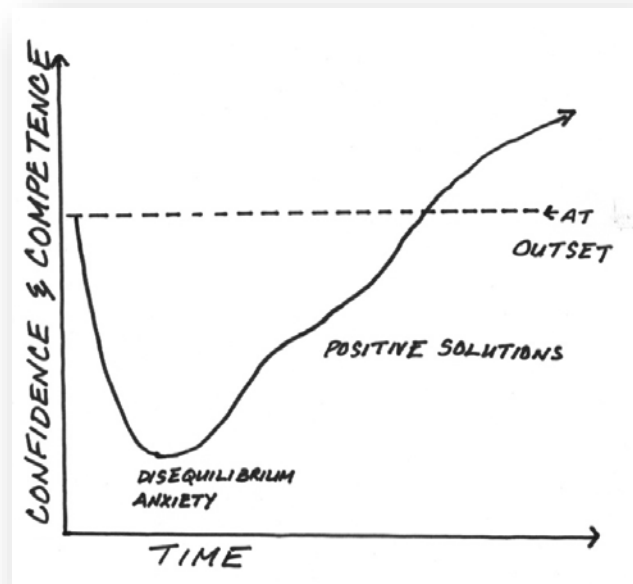


Figure 1: Implementation Dip

Dealing with Resistance

Resistance is a normal part of any major change process – and implementing PBLA certainly is a major change. If the new initiative is to work, resisters' questions and objections need to be considered and addressed, perhaps by using some of these strategies:

- Invite resisters to become part of the solution. Ask for their ideas and suggestions to engage them, if possible, in the process.
- Sit down with them to look at what they are currently doing and what fits with PBLA with small adjustments.
- Ask resisters to try one new thing and when they do, be very positive in your response. Ask if they would like to work with a colleague on something.

Over time, as effective strategies emerge and competence grows, confidence will follow.

Checking in on PBLA Implementation in Your Program

Whether you are new to PBLA or an experienced PBLA administrator, you will want to find ways to regularly check in with teachers and learners to better understand PBLA implementation at the classroom level.

To keep in touch with emerging PBLA questions, successes and challenges in your programs, consider the following techniques.

Feedback from the Lead Teacher

Regular conversations with lead teachers will help identify PBLA successes and any emerging issues. Lead teachers can help solve problems and plan professional learning sessions to address questions and issues.

Feedback from Classroom Teachers

Getting feedback on a regular basis from staff, on their level of comfort with PBLA as well as their questions or concerns, will help you plan appropriate program supports.

Information from Classroom Visits

Classroom visits can provide a valuable insight into how PBLA is being implemented in the classroom and how learners are experiencing PBLA.

Short Focused Visits: Administrators often schedule periodic visits, planned for in consultation with teachers. The objectives agreed upon will help focus the short visits and provide a starting point for conversations about PBLA implementation.

Together, you and the teacher could develop a brief list of questions you have and what will be your *look-fors*. Depending on the level of the class, the list could include items such as the following:

- Learners seem engaged in their language-learning activities. Everybody seems to know what to do.
- There is evidence of a lesson plan and the agenda or learning intents for the day have been shared with learners.
- There is evidence that learners have information about the CLB and their language level.
- There is evidence of a focus on real-world language tasks and themes relevant to learners' needs and goals.
- Learners can explain how and when they use their Language Companion.
- Learners can talk about the items in their portfolio and have an idea of the purpose of each of the items:
 - A needs assessment and goal statement
 - Evidence of recently added artefacts to one or more skill area
 - Evidence of self-assessment and learning reflections.

Typically, the administrator will select just one or two *look-fors* to focus a classroom visit.

Walk-Throughs: Some administrators like to conduct *walk-throughs*, to engage in reflective practice with teachers. The model consists of a series of frequent, unannounced classroom visits during which the observer looks for specific practices that have been discussed with the teacher in advance. Walk-throughs are usually short: three to five minutes. They are intended to be non-threatening, purposeful observations that provide quick snapshots of activity. Feedback may or may not be given after each visit. However, periodically, the observer may follow up with a face-to-face question to prompt reflection. Questions may begin with "*I noticed.... Why ...? How...?*"

Walk-throughs can easily be adapted for PBLA implementation. Before undertaking walk-throughs, tell teachers that you will be conducting informal walk-throughs to check in and support PBLA implementation. Ask teachers what you can expect to see in the classroom as evidence of PBLA implementation and task-based teaching aligned to the CLB.

Follow up after every visit is not essential, unless you observe something that is of concern. If things seem on track, you may wait until 8 to 10 visits have occurred before engaging in conversation about how things are going. Possible questions to ask the teacher include the following:

- What aspects of your PBLA practice are going well for you?
- What is something that you're working to improve? How can the program support you in this?
- You have a multilevel class. How are you managing assessment?
- What are you doing differently as a result of PBLA implementation?
- What questions do you still have about PBLA?

References

Fullan, M. (2006). *Change theory: A force for school improvement*. Seminar Series Paper No. 157. Melbourne, AU: Centre for Strategic Education.

Fullan, M. (2010). *Motion leadership: The skinny on becoming change savvy*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.