



Jackson Elementary,
Jonesboro, Georgia

Change as a Schoolwide

Journey

Principals can guide teachers along the path toward arts integration.



Art by Rachel Monsam, Roosevelt School,
Bridgeport, Connecticut

One of the most challenging and rewarding aspects of a principal's career is the opportunity to drive change. Whether it's a new principal making a mark or a veteran principal leaving a legacy, effective school leaders have the gift of transforming entire schools.

"There are magical moments for every principal when we realize we're perched at a perfect pinnacle point for change," says principal Susan Bunte. Staff at Bunte's Cincinnati school, Silverton Paideia Academy, saw the impact the arts had on students' success and went on to "deeply embrace" arts integration.

"As the principal, my role was to figure out how to embed this teaching approach schoolwide, by all teachers—even those who did not yet have high levels of comfort with art," she says. She started by identifying faculty

members who could serve as coaches and which staff members were struggling with this change.

Experts in change management find that no matter the type of organization, there are patterns to how people respond to change. Individuals typically fall into one of four groups:

1 CHAMPIONS adapt to change quickly, fully embrace trying new ways, and are highly motivated by the vision. They are likely candidates to serve as role models or coaches, and principals can leverage the champions' expertise to help others.

2 CONVINCIBLES are eager to hear more and tend to be early adopters of change. These individuals probably aren't ready to be spokespersons or coaches yet, but have high potential to be emerging leaders.

3 COMPLACENTS prefer the status quo and tend to resist change. They could come on board, but must overcome fears and skepticism. They may ask, “How will this affect me?” or say, “I doubt this change is here to stay.”

4 CRITICS are actively resistant or passive-aggressive, blatantly critical, potentially hostile, and emotionally vulnerable. They are opposed to most changes, particularly those that are perceived as insults to their past or bruise their egos.

Considering this reality of human nature helps principals realize that making any schoolwide change takes time and courageous conversations. Self-reflection is an important starting point before teachers can embrace change. “Honest, personal reflection about current teaching practices is key before a teacher realizes what and why change is needed,” Bunte shares from experience. “That realization comes from within, not top down.”

To help teachers reflect and identify where they are on the arts-infused adoption continuum, it may help to talk about teachers as travelers on a journey. This hands-on art exercise can help educators self-identify and plan their personal change.

Mode of Travel

First, articulate the arts-infused school vision as your destination. Urge teachers to think about how travelers take journeys in different vehicles, and how modes of transportation can symbolize the pace for adopting arts-infused education.

Airplane Flyers. Just like airplane travelers soar to their destination quickly, teachers who readily board an arts-infused education plane move toward the destination before other colleagues. They can share travel tips and serve as coaches. When travelers fly, obstacles and barriers seem small; mountains look like molehills. Traveling on a plane gives a unique,



Silverton Paideia Academy, Cincinnati, Ohio



big-picture perspective that enables these teachers to arrive first and help others envision what the destination looks like. Teachers who self-identify as airplane flyers consider themselves champions of the arts and highly creative leaders.

Bus Riders. Consider the expression, “Get on the bus.” Teachers who are eager to embrace arts-infused education take only a little coaxing to be convinced to board the bus. Traveling by bus gives riders the opportunity to take many alternative routes that end up at the desired destination.

Bus travelers enjoy seeing variable landscapes. Buses can stop anywhere to enjoy an unexpected experience, and can change course quickly and adapt to roadblocks by finding detour paths. Teachers who self-identify as bus riders consider themselves observant, adaptable, and flexible.

Train Passengers. Consider the

rigidity of train travel. Trains follow consistent schedules and stop at the same places every time. If a barrier emerges on the track, the train gets stuck.

Teachers who self-identify as train travelers enjoy traditional routines, predictability, and consistency. They acknowledge that they often feel stuck by barriers and have difficulty adapting to changes in directions or finding new pathways.

Walkers/Hikers. When travelers walk, it takes a tremendous amount of energy to get to the final destination. There are barriers nearly every step of the way. Molehills look like mountains. To walkers, it can feel like the whole world is soaring past, which can be intimidating.

Teachers who self-identify as walkers can get defensive, feeling everything is changing too fast. They crave appreciation for all their effort and all they’ve



LEFT AND CENTER: Silverton Paideia Academy, Cincinnati, Ohio; **RIGHT:** Cherry Valley School, Polson, Montana

endured. Although they move at a slow pace, their travel feels extremely deliberate and purposeful to them.

Progressing Toward the Destination

Drawing in metaphors is a great way for teachers to self-reflect and acknowledge where they fall on the continuum. It can also show school leaders which teachers are ready for coaching. A sketch can start a courageous conversation that wouldn't have occurred without the visual starting point.

Urge your teachers to draw images that use a journey metaphor. The sketches could either show how they feel they are traveling toward the destination of arts-infused education or how they feel their teaching team or entire school is traveling. Sharing verbal explanations about these sketches enriches everyone's understanding

of the current situation and builds a sense of appreciation for each individual—which helps the school travel closer to the destination.

After teachers gain more insight into their own attitudes about creativity, they are ready to be stretched beyond old comfort zones. Principal Michael Craver shares how the journey is progressing at Flocktown-Kossmann Elementary School in Long Valley, New Jersey: "Our creative leadership team put all teachers on the road to implementing our schoolwide commitment to creativity. They started by letting colleagues know that every teacher is a creative thinker. As teachers' confidence builds, we encourage them to dig deeper into their creative selves."

Craver uses the process of crowdsourcing to build creative collegiality among the teachers. They post emerging ideas on the "creativity

corner board" in the teachers' lounge and find this to be a "great, nonthreatening way" to say "I need help with an idea" or to build on a colleague's creative efforts. "Instead of criticizing those who do something differently than planned, we are learning to honor unique perspectives and allow for more freedom of expression from both the adults and children in our learning community," explains Craver.

He finds that this schoolwide creative journey affirms the profession. "When teachers feel permission to do more open-ended work where both they and their students can take creative risks," he says, "that is what enables teachers and children to put their personal signatures on learning." 

Cheri Sterman is director of education and child development at Crayola.



“As the art teacher, I see myself as a jet-propelled airplane heading to the arts-infused education destination. My colorful jet streams inspire classroom teachers to join the journey.”

—**KATHY KOKOLL**, Art Teacher, H. W. Mountz School, Spring Lake, New Jersey