Theoretical Frameworks to Guide School Improvement

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Purpose
A firm grounding in change theory is a necessary condition to orchestrate meaningful organization improvements. This article provides a review of four major theories of organizational change and a data-based discussion of results the implementation of one policy change.

The Article
This article provides an opportunity for practicing leaders to review four major theories of organizational change—continuous improvement, two approaches to organizational learning, and appreciative inquiry. These four theories were selected because of their emergence within the field of education, possible adaptability to school systems, and potential to support organizational change. Such theories can provide clear guidelines for successful organizational transformation, promote effective change management, and facilitate operative decision making. The implementation of a change in policy change is not sufficient to promote organizational improvement. Often, educational leaders fail to recognize the implications of policy change and potential pitfalls of changes in policy without appropriated professional development. Learning occurs at the individual and organizational levels. Learning organization passes through levels: such as personal mastery, metal models, shared vision, and learning teams. Effective application of change theory can promote meaningful changes and organizational learning.

Implications and Recommendations
Planning for changes and implementation are critical. A skillful leader can ease his or her school system into new programs with minimal problems. A key is to select a change theory that builds on the unique strengths of the institution.

Citation

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