

Tool for Force-field analysis

Source: Building Strong School Cultures: A Guide to Leading Change, by Sharon Kruse and Karen Seashore Louis. © Corwin Press, 2009. Used with permission and published in "Tools for schools", Vol. 13, No. 1, August/September 2009

Purpose: to encourage staff to think about the school as a system, rather than distinct parts, and how parts work for and against the status quo; to frame existing problems or to anticipate factors that might emerge in the process of change.

Materials: instructions, chart paper, marker

Time: 1 to 2 hours

Conducting a force-field analysis is relatively straightforward.

Where you start with force-field analysis depends on your initial analysis of the existing energy and interest within staff members. If they are raring to go, start by examining the state of the school's readiness to implement new programs. If staff are not committed to change, examine the conditions within the system itself, looking for barriers to change.

STEP 1

State the problem or desired state and make sure that all team members understand it. You can construct the statement in terms of factors working for and against a desired state (if you all agree on an ideal) or in terms of factors working for and against the status quo or problem state (if you agree that a problem exists but do not agree on the ideal state). Make sure that there is consensus and understanding at this point or eventually you will have to start over!

STEP 2

Brainstorm the positive and negative forces. You don't have to be definitive the first time around. You can add forces later in the discussion.

STEP 3

Review and clarify each force or factor. What is behind each factor? What works to balance the situation? This discussion is very important and may allow you to add or change the factors that you

have generated in Step 2.

STEP 4

When you can reach consensus on a reasonable list of important factors, determine the strength of hindering forces (high, medium, low) in achieving the desired state or from improving the problem state. When the force-field technique is used for problem analysis, the forces with the biggest impact should be tested as likely causes. If the force-field analysis is used to develop solutions, those factors with the biggest impact may become the focus of plans to reduce resistance to change.

STEP 5

Develop an action plan to address the largest hindering forces.