

Foundations of Systems Change  
Lesson 2: Handling Resistance to Change

Below are a few reasons for resistance to change and some strategies to help address it.

1. Teachers must believe the changes will make a difference
  - Leaders have verified the changes are evidence-based, supported by other practitioners, and can provide significant positive impact.
  - The proposed changes match staff-identified needs.
  - Support to learn, implement, and sustain the change must be assured.
2. Several types of support are needed
  - Provide high-quality, up-front professional learning.
  - Provide ongoing skill-building training sessions.
  - Break down new approaches into sequential steps.
  - Provide opportunities for feedback and coaching.
  - Make sure teachers know how to make the changes and are comfortable doing so.
3. Teachers and staff must see what is expected and believe it will work
  - Provide experiences and examples that demonstrate how and why it works.
  - Modeling, visits to other MO SW-PBS schools, videos, question and answer sessions, study groups.
  - Allow them time to experiment and adjust before full implementation(preparation phase).
  - Allow time for staff to make up their own minds.
4. Stakeholders must be involved in the decision-making
  - Provide opportunities for involvement in decisions; learn a variety of decision-making strategies.
  - Respect teachers' professional autonomy and work to incorporate it where appropriate.
  - The Leadership Team should be representative of the staff.
  - Involve staff in the generation of ideas before making decisions.
  - Clarify decision-making — who makes what decisions and how they will be made, and share these structures with staff. Transparency will serve you well in the long term.
5. Respect the expertise of the staff
  - Recognize the expertise within the building and make sure those who wish to contribute are asked to do so.
  - Presenters/team leaders should listen respectfully to staff questions and ideas.
  - Recognition of staff contributions should be ongoing.
  - Provide opportunities for reflection and shared vision.
6. Understand and improve upon prior experiences with change
  - When SW-PBS is being introduced, be sure adequate opportunities for input and practice have been built into the implementation plan.
  - Have people identify how this change is similar and different from in the past.
  - Allow time for implementation to be effective, using a variety of strategies that respect the individuality of your stakeholders.
  - Administrative leadership publicly supports implementation and the ongoing work to ensure success.
  - Clarify that SW-PBS is a valued change and will be a long term commitment by all and that it is worth the investment to learn, invest in, and utilize what is implemented.

Reference: Knight, J. (2009). What can we do about teacher resistance? Phi Delta Kappan 90(7), 508-513.