



## Adaptive Leadership Series Part 1: The Basics of Adaptive Leadership

Presented by:

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### Learning Objectives Today:

- Describe the differences between adaptive & technical challenges
- Diagnose where adaptive and technical challenges exist your school communities
- Identify ways we can approach complex change and maintain an equilibrium to support those we support through change initiatives
- Learn from practice scenarios to identify adaptive and technical elements and identify ways to effectively support others through the process of complex change initiatives



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*Effective leadership development does not happen in a vacuum, or in a classroom, but rather in the flow of engaging work. It is a process, not an event."*

~ Richard Elmore (2004)

**Think & Jot:**  
**What does effective leadership *in action* look like to you?**



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## Think & Jot

Consider the last few months of school.  
 Jot down the 5 - 8 challenges  
 you have encountered as a leader.



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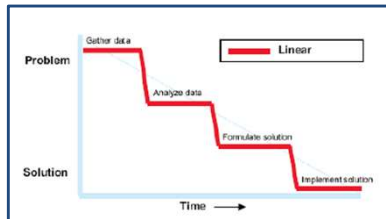


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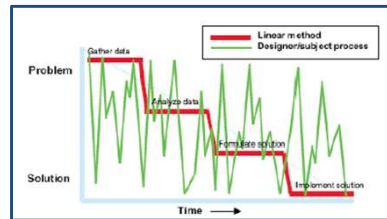
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## Complex Problems

What we think will happen.



What actually happens.



Why does this happen (to the right) as our typical experience?

Source: Conklin, J. (2006). Dialogue mapping. *Building Shared Understanding of Wicked Problems*. West Sussex, England: John Wiley & Sons.

## Where is our starting place?

I am a **Novice at Adaptive Leadership**.

I don't know much about it and/or I don't fully understand it yet.

I am an **Apprentice at Adaptive Leadership**.

I know the basic concepts and am starting to get it, but I still need someone to coach me through it.

I am a **Practitioner of Adaptive Leadership**.

I understand the concepts around it and I apply it in my everyday work as a leader but I'm still learning.

I am an **Expert at Adaptive Leadership**.

I understand it well and I could thoroughly teach it to someone else.

*Please take a moment and complete our pre-assessment poll to see where the group stands as we begin.*

## Adaptive & Technical Challenges



Adaptive challenges can be **complex, unpredictable, and ambiguous** in nature. Solutions often require people to learn **new ways** of doing things, **new lines of thinking** and adopting an **experimental mindset**. There are often lots of **moving parts**.



Technical challenges are **easier to address**. We can often **use our current resources** to solve them. It **does not require a shift in thinking** to address these challenges. The solutions are more **procedural** in nature.

## Car Analogy

- ◆ Car has problems.
- ◆ Take it to mechanic.
- ◆ Usually the mechanic can fix the car.
- ◆ But if your car problems stem from the way a family member drives the car, the problems are likely to recur.



**Technical:** Taking the car back again and again to the mechanic to fix the car.

**Adaptive:** Talking to family members & address underlying problems (e.g., become more cautious when braking, practice)



## Getting Healthy



### Technical:

- What will you eat?
- How often?
- When will you go shopping?
- Scheduling exercise
- Keeping a food journal

### Adaptive:

- Eating the right food even when you want chocolate
- Buying the healthier food
- Doing the exercise consistently
- Addressing our mental obstacles

*Adaptive challenges cause us to **experience discomfort** and **loss** at times.*



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## What are adaptive problems?

***“Adaptive Problems are often systemic problems with no ready answers.”***

*~ Art of Leadership (Heifetz & Laurie)*

- Address the distress
- Take on new roles, relationships, and values
- New approaches and strategies of operating
- Mobilize people



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## ***What questions to ask ourselves as an adaptive leader?***

- Whose ***values, beliefs, attitudes, or behaviors*** would have to change in order ***for progress*** to take place?
- What ***shifts in priorities, resources, and power*** were necessary?
- What ***sacrifices*** would have to be made and ***by whom?***

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### **Technical Challenges**



Well defined
Current expertise or strategies
Procedural & routine tasks
Clear solutions are present
Fairly easy to implement
Perspectives easily align
Often can be done by most staff
Leader often has responsibility

### **Examples:**

- course scheduling
- attendance
- safety procedures
- hallway procedures
- cafeteria procedures
- parent entry procedures
- scheduling evaluations of teachers
- resolving some student conflicts

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Adaptive Challenges	Examples:
Requires you to revise & rethink current ways of working	● Implementing a new program
Solutions outside of current expertise or strategies	● Aligning pedagogical philosophies
Examine our beliefs & values	● Learning new roles
Implementation is unclear	● Teaching new content or programs
Common understanding & beliefs are critical for change	● Implementing new schoolwide behaviors
Unearths competing perspectives	● Anything that challenges <i>"the way we do business"</i> that that can create discomfort/resistance
Requires new learning	
Shared responsibility for success	

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## Back to our Lists

Effective Leadership: *What do you notice that was **adaptive** from your list?*

Recent Challenges:

*What do you notice that was **adaptive** in nature from your list?*

*What did you notice that was **technical** in nature?*

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# What influences the our lens?







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# Dance Floor & The Balcony View





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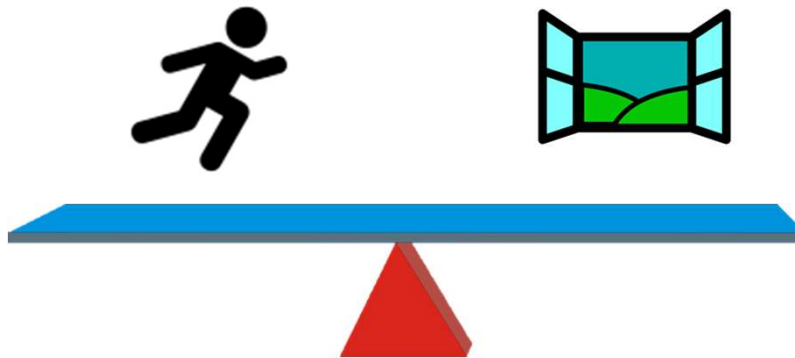
## When Leaders Get on the Balcony



- Pause - Think - Align
- Notice what is happening around us
- Look for patterns
- Stop being swept up in “action” mode
- Identify the struggles and the underlying issues (often several to address)
- Identify where we can mobilize people, where we need support, how can we evaluate

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## Balancing Support





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## Select One & Share Out

What **squared or agreed** with your thinking?

What is **swirling around** in your head that you are **wondering** about?

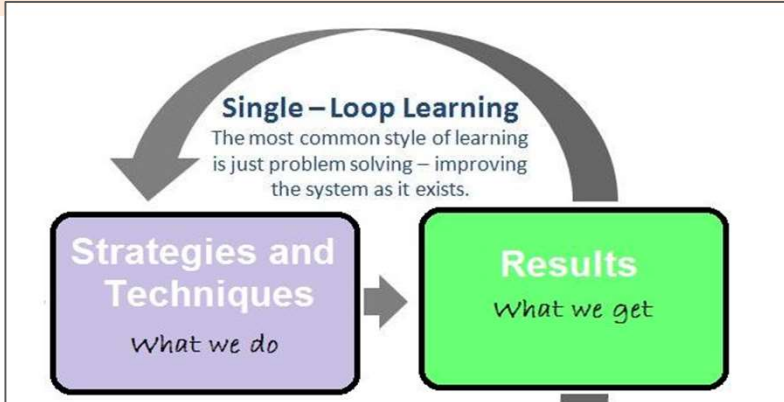
What is something that **pointed you in a new direction** of thinking?


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## Argyris & Schon: Single Loop Learning



**Single – Loop Learning**  
The most common style of learning is just problem solving – improving the system as it exists.



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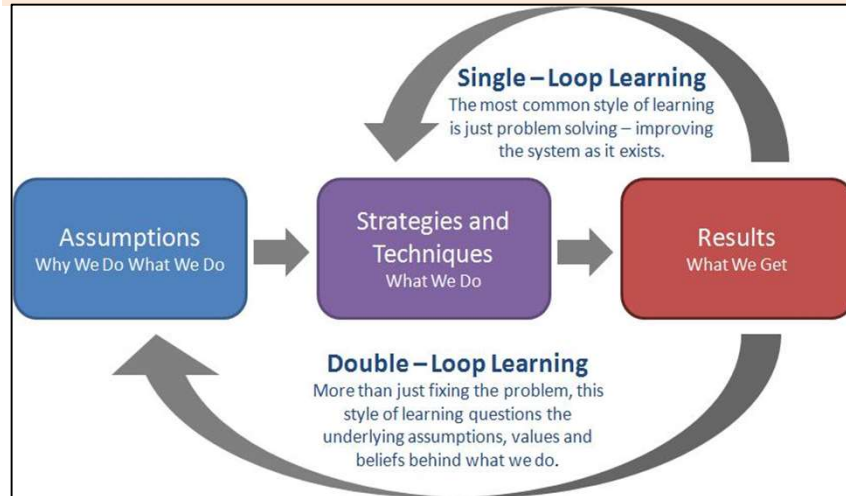
graph LR
    A[Strategies and Techniques  
What we do] --> B[Results  
What we get]
    B --> A
    
```

Picture 2, <http://www.leadershipnow.com/leadingblog/2008/05/>


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## Argyris & Schon: Double Loop Learning



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## Inviting Cognitive Diversity to the Table

### What it IS:

- Equity - all voices
- Activating group intelligence - answers lie within
- Different perspectives to help see the problems
- Seeking out often unknown or untested solutions

**Cognitive Diversity**



### What it is NOT:

- A groupthink
- Expecting an “expert” to come give us the answers
- Working in isolation & a top-down approach
- Selecting people simply because of a role



**Collective Intelligence**



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## Scenario Example

### Scenario: Implementing a new program/initiative

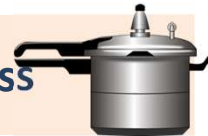
#### Technical Challenges:

- Scheduling
- When will teachers get training?
- When to schedule follow-up?
- Who will support them?
- What materials will they need?
- When will they learn about them?

#### Adaptive Challenges:

- How will we collectively understand the why behind the change?
- What changes? What stays the same? Shifts?
- How will we provide ongoing training?
- How will we get ahead of addressing barriers?
- How will we address the process entire year?


## 3 Ways to Regulate Distress



Holding Environment	<i>Analogy of a pressure cooker</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Creates conditions to talk about challenges they face</li> <li>● Frame and debate issues</li> <li>● Clarify assumptions behind competing perspectives and values</li> </ul>
Managing the Rate of Change	<i>In Context</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Direction</li> <li>● Protection</li> <li>● Orientation</li> <li>● Managing conflict - create an engine for creativity &amp; learning</li> <li>● Shaping new norms</li> </ul>
Presence & Poise	<i>Restore equilibrium for this tough, conflict-filled work</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Emotional capacity to tolerate uncertainty, frustration, and pain</li> <li>● Raise tough questions without getting anxious themselves</li> <li>● Observe the verbal and nonverbal cues &amp; hold steady</li> <li>● Communicate with confidence</li> </ul>


Source: Heifetz, R. & Laurie, D. (1998). The work of leadership. *Harvard Business Review*, January-February, pp. 171-197.

## Seed Analogy for Cognitive Load




**Intrinsic Load**  
*What do they **already** know?*

Example: Content knowledge for one teacher might be solid but just learning for another (impacts complexity & prior knowledge).





**Germane Load**  
*What is **just right** for adult learning?*

Example: The teacher is given on-going support and guidance to understand examples in how to do it effectively and work through challenges.




**Extraneous Load**  
*What is **too much** for them?*

Example: The teacher attends a PD once and is required to figure out how to solve challenges with minimal guidance from the colleagues and leaders.



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## Maintain the Equilibrium as an Adaptive Leader



What are some ways we can **optimize support** for initiatives?



What are some ways we can **minimize obstacles** for staff for initiatives?


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## Questions to Consider for Planning Ahead & Managing the Change

- How can we tailor this initiative based on **teachers' existing knowledge & skills**?
- What **capacity can we leverage** in this process?
- What **resources** can we tap into to see models of this initiative in practice with success?
- How can we **create a continuum of support** for teachers to gradually increase competence & confidence with its application?
- What is the **essential information** teachers need to know? How will that be communicated? How often? By whom? How will we have **two-way feedback loops**?

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## Questions to Consider for Planning Ahead & Managing the Change

- What is **essential information** for them to know? Of that, what is critical that is **presented together for understanding & application**?
- What is the **inessential information** that is “nice to know” but is not necessary? When might we want to introduce this information if needed?
- How can we **simplify complex information** so it is digestible for teachers? How can we create space for understanding?
- How can we **walk teachers through a process** so we can **talk out barriers & strategies** for **addressing them** *before* they arise in application?



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## Circle - Square - Triangle

What **squared or agreed** with your thinking?

What is something that **pointed you in a new direction** of thinking?

What is **swirling around** in your head that you are **wondering** about?


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## Where is our ending place today?

<p>I am a <b>Novice at Adaptive Leadership</b>. I don't know much about it and/or I don't fully understand it yet.</p>	<p>I am an <b>Apprentice at Adaptive Leadership</b>. I know the basic concepts and am starting to get it, but I still need someone to coach me through it.</p>	<p>I am a <b>Practitioner of Adaptive Leadership</b>. I understand the concepts around it and I apply it in my everyday work as a leader but I'm still learning.</p>	<p>I am an <b>Expert at Adaptive Leadership</b>. I understand it well and I could thoroughly teach it to someone else.</p>
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*Please take a moment and complete our post-assessment poll to see where the group stands as we conclude today.*


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## Join us Next Week for Part II

### Part II: The Art and Science of Adaptive Leadership Practices

This session will build off of Part I: The Basics of Adaptive Leadership - Getting Started as we identify ways to mobilize the system and support adaptive challenges in our school communities.

*Participants will be able to:*

- Explore the seven behaviors of adaptive leadership that support school communities as they embark on change initiatives
- Identify ways to design effective interventions to support various stakeholders' voice and perspective
- Examine a current change initiative you are responsible for implementing as a personal activity to identify how to support and guide others through adaptive challenges
- Analyze ways to productively orchestrate conflict and build an adaptive culture that is reflective and supports continuous learning as an iterative process for your school



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## Your Feedback Matters

- Please fill out the [evaluation link in the chat box](https://forms.gle/YnY9Nqj8rfdKVGQ56) now, or ASAP.

<https://forms.gle/YnY9Nqj8rfdKVGQ56>

- Watch for a [follow up email](#) with links to the [evaluation](#) as well as PPT [slides and resources](#) from this session.



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## References

Conklin, J. (2006). *Wicked problems & social complexity* (p. 11). San Francisco, CA: CogNexus Institute.

Heifetz, R. A., & Laurie, D. L. (1997). The work of leadership. *Harvard business review*, 75, 124-134.

Heifetz, R. A., Heifetz, R., Grashow, A., & Linsky, M. (2009). *The practice of adaptive leadership: Tools and tactics for changing your organization and the world*. Harvard Business Press.

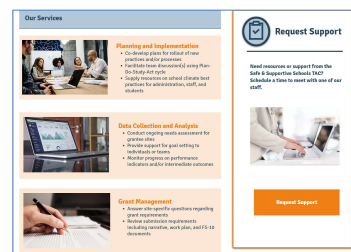


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## Thank you for participating!

Visit our website & reach out for support!

[www.nys-ssstac.org](http://www.nys-ssstac.org)



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