

Preface

“Change is good. You go first.”

—Dilbert (Adams, 2005)

The topic of change has been studied and turned over and studied again with good reason: change can be beneficial, but changing is hard. The human brain—and its leadership and organizational manifestations—is wired for certainty and to maintain the status quo. Going all the way back to our human roots, there is potential danger in stepping away from the warmth and light of our campfire, however curious we are with what might lie beyond it.

But there is also incredible potential in getting change right. By the time you read this passage, the nation will have celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the Apollo 11 moon landing. The Apollo program was the single largest enterprise ever undertaken by man, dwarfing the building of the pyramids, the Panama Canal, or our interstate highway system. It involved some 420,000 scientists, engineers, technicians, electricians, and just about any other type of “cians” you can imagine. And it required some two thousand contractors and subcontractors to work together to put the complicated Apollo puzzle together piece by piece.

President Kennedy may have laid down the challenge to the nation to “commit itself to achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to the Earth,” but as anyone on the project would tell you, knowing *how* to go to the moon was an entirely different matter.

The team simply didn’t know what it didn’t know.

In the early sixties, a rocket that was powerful enough to get astronauts to the moon didn’t exist. Nor was there an agreed-upon system to get them *on* and *off* the moon.

Computers, which were going to be the single most critical component of navigating in space, were, at the time, the size of a large

refrigerator or walk-in closets. Imagine that inside what we know today as the tiny confines of the Apollo Command Module.

No one knew how to undock, dock, and redock two spacecraft in space. Solving that problem became a key determinant of success.

Mathematics certainly existed, but the extremely complicated math formulas required to determine flight paths, orbits, and docking maneuvers didn't.

Oh, those pesky details.

The collective effort overcame innumerable hurdles and setbacks, including the deaths of three astronauts. It required massive changes in computing, rocketry, organizational management, problem solving, and attitudes. Fundamentally, it required everyone to remain insanely curious, to experiment to find out what worked, and to learn that what has never been done before didn't mean it can't be done now.

We know how the story ends. Change can be very, very worth it.

Why This Book on Change?

This is a book about shifting how you lead productive, desired change in schools. And when we say *change*, we're referring to *complex* changes such as implementing a block schedule, adopting new instructional strategies, or changing the school culture to achieve desired outcomes. These are the types of changes that can take many months or years to complete depending on a variety of factors. That said, the points we make herein can also positively impact the day-to-day adjustments that you must make in what is often the hyperactive school or district setting.

Shifting Traditional Thinking About School Change

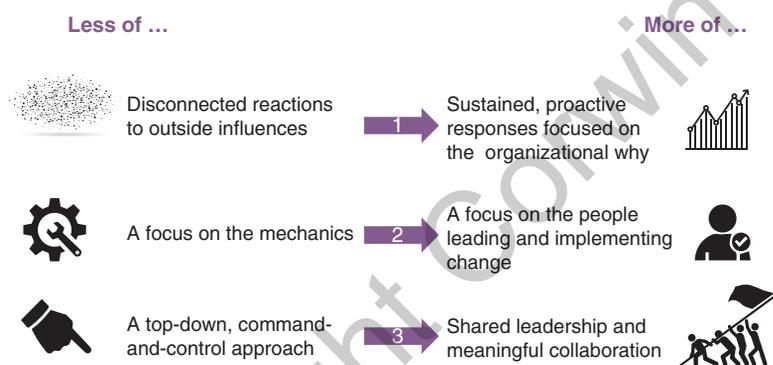
This book shifts traditional thinking about change in schools in three important ways:

- It *shifts* from what can often be an understandably tactical reaction to outside influences and influencers to one of purposeful changes in support of a school or district's *why*—the overall impact either seeks to have relative to those it serves.
- It *shifts* from what can be a weighted focus on the technical and management aspects of change to a more balanced explanation that emphasizes a focus on the people leading and implementing the change. As such, we're as much interested in the neuroscience of change as we are in the mechanical process of change.

Shifting, in its heart and soul, is a book about school leadership and its relationship to and impact on the organization. *Shifting* is a move away from the top-down, command-and-control type of leadership to one where leaders seek to develop their own curiosity, vulnerability, and authenticity, all in the service of meaningful collaboration.

- It *shifts* from a mindset that change is a series of singular, disconnected, reactive events to one where change actions are proactively engaged in and looked at as cohesively working toward desired outcomes and impact.

Figure 0.1 Three Essential Shifts to Create Productive Change



Ultimately, this is a book about promoting a culture that produces productive change on behalf of the population the school or district serves—a culture promoted through an atmosphere of curiosity, experimentation, and sustained learning. According to Dave Schuler, 2018 Illinois and National Superintendent of the Year, with whom we spoke in preparation for writing this book, the *sustained learning* part takes faculty members back to why they got into education in the first place. “I think there’s a huge misnomer that teachers get into teaching because they love to teach. I think teachers get into teaching because they love to learn.”

Five Distinguishing Hallmarks

Five elements distinguish our approach.

Element 1: The ARC Model of Change

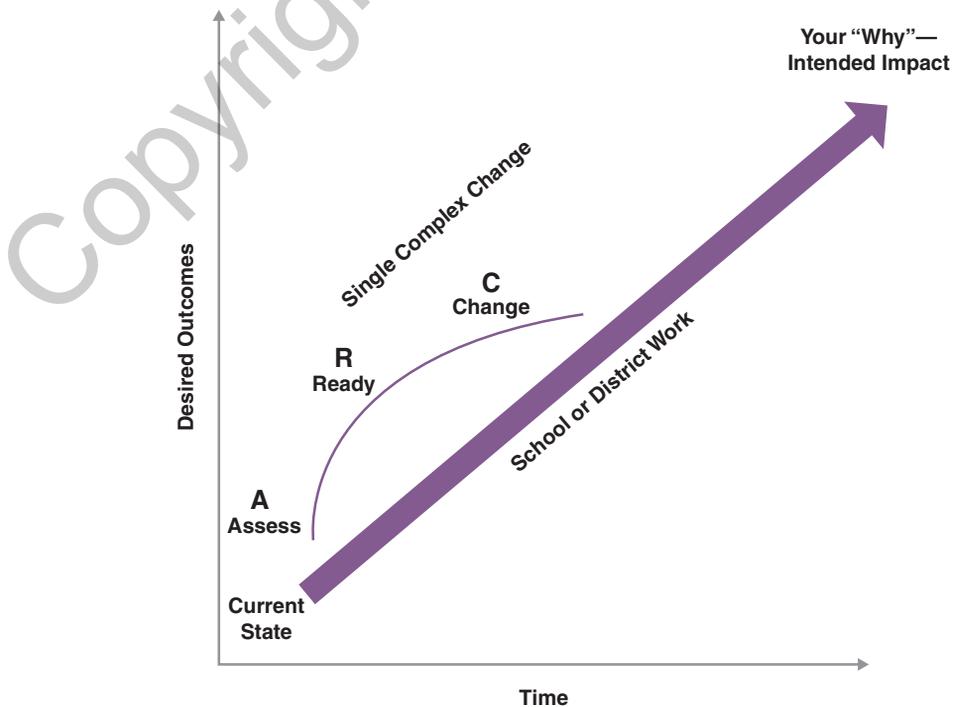
Books that outline a framework or process for change do so because it provides a pathway with handrails: Now you are here. We fully

support that notion but wanted to create a process that was infinitely simple to understand and negotiate without being simplistic. Our process is linear—we start here, move here, and so on—but it’s not a straight line. It can and must circle back on itself when the underlying elements of change require it.

So we created the ARC model of change, shown in Figure 0.2, running parallel to the other work the school and or district must manage—both pathways contributing to the impact the school or district is trying to have on behalf of the students and community it serves. This illustration shows a single, complex change underway. In Chapter 9, we present a more complex—and perhaps more realistic—model showing multiple changes underway simultaneously.

We’re often asked, “How long does any single change take?” That’s an extremely complicated question to answer because there are so many variables. A quick win might be accomplished in a few months while some complex change efforts, as some of our interviewees suggested, could take years. One consistent piece of advice we received from the educators who we interviewed for the book was “Go slow to go fast.” As we will discuss in the chapters ahead, the urgency of change is around the imperative to address the issue, not the pace at which you do so. Be curious. Experiment. Learn.

Figure 0.2 The ARC Model of Change



A = Assess allows you to take stock of your situation—including yourself, your organization, and your environment—so you can better understand the full picture and then clearly define what impact you intend to have and what problem you are trying to solve with a specific change.

R = Ready helps you and your team prepare to make a change by focusing on the problem; coming up with many potential solutions; considering them given time, resources, and impact; and choosing how you will proceed.

C = Change gets you into motion, experimenting by taking action and monitoring progress during and after the change. *Change* asks you to evaluate early results, refine your actions, build momentum, acknowledge wins, and keep your energy up until you have completely implemented the solution.

We will fully explore each of these phases in the pages that follow.

Element 2: Leadership Spotlights

Throughout the book, you will see **Leadership Spotlights**—sidebars in the manuscript that highlight essential leadership insights to guide you in implementing change in your schools.



Element 3: Minds-On, Hands-On Approach

Sometimes reading about a topic isn't enough, so in addition to the numerous embedded questions throughout the narrative, we've built in **Try This** activities at the end of every chapter to help shape your skills, thinking, and experimentation.

In addition, you'll encounter references throughout to additional online activities, models, and worked-out examples, which can be found at www.shiftingforimpact.com. As important as they are, we felt including these tools directly in the narrative would have interrupted the flow.

Element 4: Insights From Change Leaders

Because of our focus on the importance of people in the change process, we wanted to hear periodically from leaders who are wrestling with the real issues of change. So we conducted extensive interviews and included their stories at key junctures to make or reinforce a point in the narrative. They show up as

- brief quotes—a sentence or two,
- **Leader Stories**—sixteen lengthier comments that provide deeper insight, and



- **Leader Voices**—seventeen brief recordings accessed via the QR code located on page xiv as well as at the end of each chapter, or found at the book's website, www.shiftingforimpact.com.

Element 5: An Integrated Tapestry of Wisdom

Professional support books are often defined by their narrow focus: You read one for one purpose and another for a different purpose. One of the things we've attempted to do here is to weave the wisdom from a number of sources together to form a new tapestry around the topics of leadership and change, including our ARC model of change. The experienced educators among you may meet some old friends, such as Jim Collins, Daniel Goleman, and Liz Wiseman, but we're also bringing forth voices that may be new to you, such as Kimberly Davis's (2018) *Brave Leadership*, Patrick Lencioni's (2012) *The Advantage*, and Michael Bungay Stanier's (2016) *The Coaching Habit*. It's our intent to weave these voices together in a unique cloth that enriches your reading experience and your ability to undertake purposeful change through our ARC model.

Who Is This Book Intended For?

We started out writing this book for school administrators, but as we worked through it, we became convinced the message could serve the entire school staff, and here's why. As you'll read within, we believe that when you consider a complex change process in education, you should be asking yourself *and* the larger organization some key questions:

Why are we considering this change?

How does this change tie into other change initiatives we have underway or have implemented?

What outcomes and overall impact are we trying to achieve on behalf of those we serve?

Simply put, effective change doesn't happen because of one person. It's the *we* that undertakes change and makes it succeed. *Shifting* could easily be used for a book study by a team in advance of tackling a complex change.

That said, changing how you change ultimately starts with you. It's only a short step from the previous questions to some fundamental ones that reflect back on an earlier you—the you who stepped into a classroom or administrative office for the first time:

Why did I get involved in education to begin with?

What was I trying to accomplish for my students and for myself?

What impact was I trying to have?

Pausing to reflect on those questions is the first step toward becoming the change leader you want and need to be.

Those individuals you have wanted to serve since day one are waiting.

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