



# *Schlechty Center on Change*

*Schlechty Center on Change* focuses on transforming schools from organizations based on the assumption that the core business of schools has to do with producing compliance and attendance to organizations where the core business focuses attention on nurturing attention and commitment.

***Schlechty Center on Change*** is the basis for the Center's **10 System Capacity Standards**.

The Schlechty Center proceeds from the assumption that if schools and school districts are to be successful in producing the level and quality of learning that is required in the modern world, they must be transformed from organizations in which the core business is producing compliance and attendance to organizations in which the core business is nurturing attention and commitment. To accomplish this transformation, schools and school districts will need to undergo systemic change as well as introduce innovations that are disruptive and threatening to many of the interests that are served by the present arrangement of schools. In support of this assumption, the Schlechty Center has developed frameworks to help school leaders who are committed to bringing this transformation about. One of these frameworks is *Schlechty Center on Change*; the following set of statements summarizes this position:

According to Clayton Christensen, author of *The Innovator's Dilemma*, there are two kinds of innovations: ***sustaining*** and ***disruptive***.

***Sustaining innovations*** are those innovations which are congruent with existing systems and which existing systems have the capacity to support and sustain over time. Sustaining innovations can be introduced through strategies that are quite similar to the strategies used in improvement efforts since such innovations do not require much in the way of systemic change. In other words, sustaining innovations can be introduced through well-articulated, codified, and pre-packaged projects and programs of action.

***Disruptive innovations*** are those innovations which are incongruent with existing systems and/or which are beyond the capacity of present systems to support and sustain for a long enough time to demonstrate their effectiveness. Improvement can result from actions intended to enhance or improve the skill with which persons employ the present technology (or means of doing the job). These actions are properly viewed as training activities and are sometimes also referred to as staff development. They are also frequently associated with the introduction of sustaining innovations. Sometimes, the improvements needed go beyond the technologies the present system has the capacity to support and require the introduction of innovations that require supportive changes in systems as well as changes in the orientations and performance capabilities of individuals. Such innovations cannot be introduced through programs and projects. These innovations and the systemic changes that are needed to support them can only be introduced through leaders who understand the nature of systems and systemic change. Such leaders must possess the courage and the fortitude to bring about changes in the *structure and culture* of the school to enhance the possibility of success.



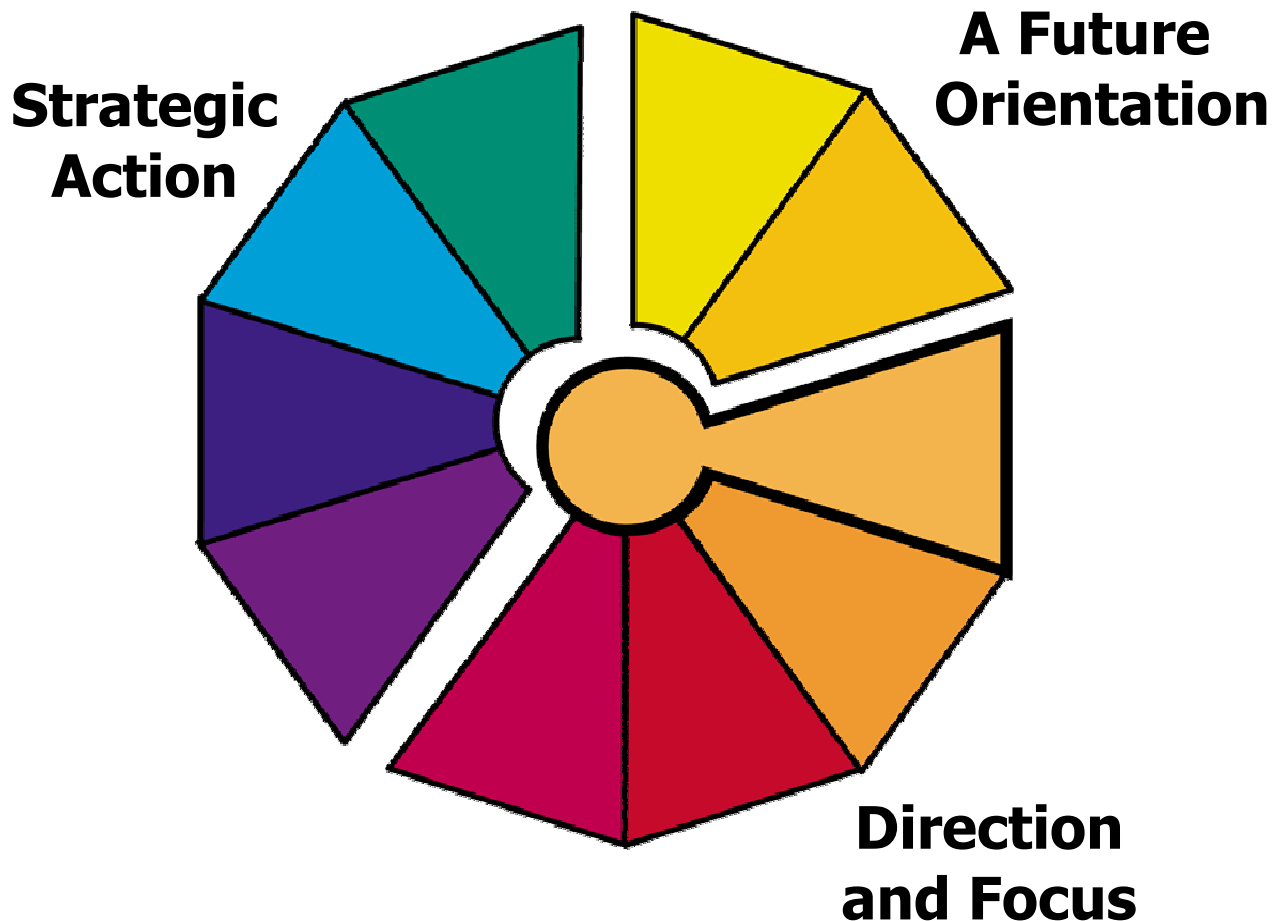
The **structure** and **culture** of the school gain expression through systems of *norms*. Both structure and culture determine the capacity of the school to accept and incorporate new technologies. (The **structure** of the school refers to existing systems of rules, roles, and relationships. The **culture** refers to the values, commitments, tradition, lore, and shared meanings of the school.)

The *normative system* is organized around functional areas that are critical to the life of the school district and school:

- Recruitment and Induction System
- Knowledge Development and Transmission System
- Power and Authority System
- Evaluation System
- Directional System
- Boundary System

For schools to be able to support and sustain the systemic changes needed to introduce disruptive innovations they must possess the following capacities:

- the capacity to focus on the future
- the capacity to maintain direction in the face of adversity
- the capacity to act strategically





The capacity to **focus on the future** requires leaders:

- to clearly identify and articulate the core business of schools and to persuade others regarding this matter.
- to articulate and share with others beliefs that are consistent with the nature of the business as it is defined and to gain consensus on those beliefs.
- to develop a vision of the school or school system that is based on and congruent with the beliefs that guide the system and help others to see the meaning of this vision for the positions and roles they occupy.
- to develop a shared understanding of the problems that must be addressed and the changes that must take place if the vision that has been articulated is to be realized.

The capacity to **maintain direction** requires leaders:

- to center all activity on the pursuit of the core business and make all decisions with an eye toward enhancing the capacity of the school and those who work in schools to conduct this business effectively, efficiently, and ethically.
- to use the beliefs and values that guide the organization as standards for assessing the merit and worth of decisions and the consequences of actions that result from those decisions.
- to ensure that those whose support is needed and whose actions are required to install the innovation have sufficient involvement in decisions that affect them and their interests to encourage them to voluntarily “buy in” to the actions, even when their short-term personal interests may appear to be threatened.
- to ensure that systems are in place to support continuity of leadership, including but not limited to the development of appropriate induction systems and evaluation systems as well as leadership succession plans.

The capacity to **act strategically** requires leaders:

- to ensure that those who support the innovative effort are themselves provided the training and support they need, including but not limited to political support, resources (time, people, space, information, and technology), and social support (for example, collegial support).
- to encourage a spirit of experimentalism by reducing the risks attached to failure on initial tries and by encouraging the expression of contrary and controversial views.
- to ensure that the hardware, software, and skills required to install the innovation are present and accessible to all who need them.
- to identify and develop those partnerships and other collaborative arrangements that will enhance the installation of the innovation and develop strategies to protect the innovative effort from distracting forces from inside or outside the existing system.



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