



Four P's to Successful and Sustained Implementation of AuCE Principles and Practices

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Present —> Promote —> Practice —> Preserve

This is a follow-up to Debbie's podcast, which focused on "not just one more thing", but rather on the crucial aspect of change management for Authentic Christian Educators. This is arguably the most significant contribution we can make to school leaders, who are often overwhelmed. Introducing new ideas or initiatives to their staff without considering the potential impact, involving them in the development or implementation process, or even engaging them as champions can sometimes be the difference between success and failure. It's not just about whether an idea is good; it's about its receptivity within the school community.

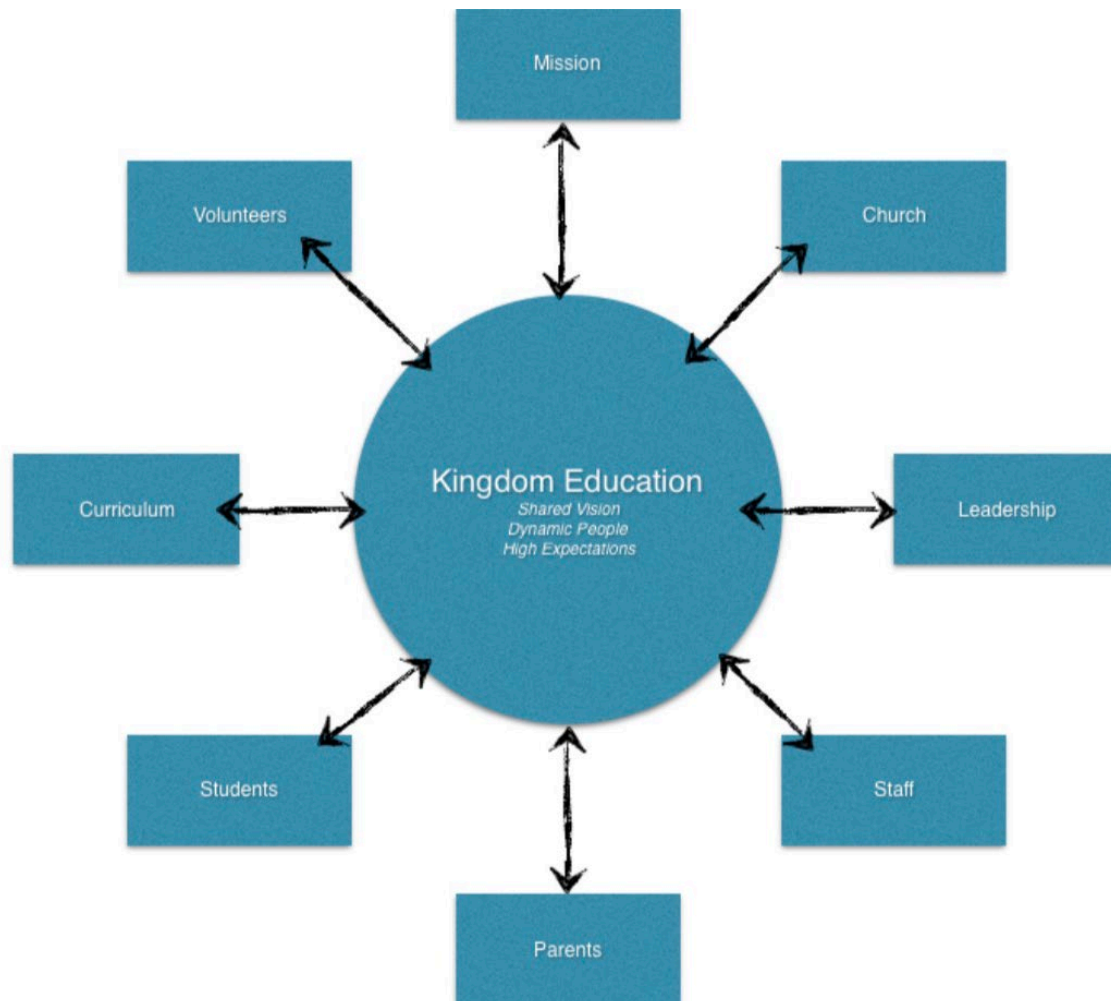
From a change management perspective, one of the first groups to consider is the champions and gatekeepers within the school. These individuals play a vital role in the success of any change. Champions are those who will readily support the initiative because it resonates with them. It's crucial to rally these champions, as they can drive momentum and ensure the project's success. However, it's important to recognize that champions may not always have the authority to implement the change unless publicly given that authority by leadership. Therefore, it's essential to address both the champions and the gatekeepers.

Gatekeepers are those who have positional authority within an institution, but who may be bullish on the new initiative. While the school leader can mandate change, compliance by the gatekeeper will last as long as the school leader's ability to withstand the resistance or make a strategic change with the gatekeeper. There is obvious risk involved here and should be the last resort if the initiative is that meaningful to the school community. The best-case scenario is that the champion is also the gatekeeper. The key is to engage the gatekeepers early in the change management process, diligently hearing their concerns, and giving them a safe space to express concern. By involving them from the outset, we can ensure that the change is well-received and implemented effectively.

Having a framework for rolling out any initiatives is of utmost importance.

One of the most formative experiences for me, as a young leader, was learning about kingdom education. As I attended several conferences in those early years, I gained two crucial insights.

Firstly, I realized that as a leader, my responsibility was to establish pathways for each of my school's constituent groups to understand God's vision for education, the school's role in realizing that vision (codified in the mission, vision, and core values), and then help them understand the unique role they play in the process.



At the conference, I learned there were approximately seven constituent groups, ranging from students and parents to staff to board members. The graphic above was our school's adaptation of the original graphic from the Kingdom School Institute. Because discipleship and evangelism were central to kingdom advancement, I saw my responsibility as a leader to create opportunities for these groups to connect with the heart of God through education. Connecting each of these groups was a matter of crafting a discipleship plan that brings all parts of the school into strategic alignment under the banner of kingdom education. Each of these groups has special needs and interests and foci as it relates to the training of students. What remains central and what the leader must cultivate is a discernible (though not easy to tread) pathway for each group to contribute meaningfully to the spiritual formation of the entire community, especially the students.

The method I learned at the kingdom education conferences and subsequently employed as a head of school, and now in my role at ACSI consists of four steps: present, promote, practice, and preserve.

Present - Introduce the concept. Position the “why” within the context of advancing God’s kingdom, connect it to the mission, vision, core values of the school, and show how you envision this impacting and fulfilling the expected student outcomes. Ideally, these conversations begin internally by creating space for meaningful discussion and time for processing. Gather the gatekeepers and champions and begin the dialogue. Gatekeepers here include all the key people in each of your constituent groups. Give it time with a deadline to determine the next crucial steps.

Promote — Now that you have taken time to present these concepts, had meaningful discussions, identified roadblocks, and determined next steps, it is time to move from internal to external. In this stage, the leader considers the best place to begin introducing these concepts and casting a vision about what’s coming. This promotion should be wide and broad, and the communication should be both organic (activating your champions and gatekeepers to facilitate questions and hear concerns) and crafted as the public promotion phase gets underway. This is having the proverbial air and ground attack synced up. Gather a group of individuals, discuss the idea, and seek their input on how to implement it effectively. Even if you have initial ideas as a leader, involving others can provide valuable perspectives.

Practice — Different schools may progress at varying paces, depending on their readiness. The key is for a leader to have a clear understanding of the school’s dynamics. The best approach is to engage key individuals in conversations as early as possible. For example, present the idea in the first year, promote it in the second year, and provide opportunities for practice in the third. This practice will help you bake the concept into the school’s DNA, making it an integral part of its operations and daily routines. It becomes a way of doing things. Practicing isn’t necessarily about adding more time. It’s about taking a closer look at the time you already have and asking, “How can we use this time more effectively?” Are there ways we can use our time differently? The key is to do everything you can from a change management perspective, not to add more time, but to make the most of the time you already have. If you find that you really need more time, that’s okay. But as long as there’s agreement or buy-in from your gatekeepers and champions, who can provide valuable guidance on how to implement the change, you can move forward.

Preserve — After your first year of full implementation, begin the process of documenting what is working. It will take upwards of three years (of practicing) for this change to become part of the culture of the school. During this process of change, mistakes will be made and successes will be celebrated. Document it all, the entire process from start to finish. This serves as a baseline, year over year, for making those necessarily small adjustments. This way, if anyone comes along or you want to hand off this program or its stewardship to someone else, you’ve

already documented what has worked. This eliminates the need for people to create something from scratch, providing them with a clear idea of how to proceed.

Each year presents its own set of challenges, and over time, you may need to recontextualize and even modify many of your practices. However, as long as the principles are in place, drifting is mitigated when the program or initiative is handed over to a new director.

Preservation encompasses various aspects, including sample communication and schedules. The goal is to pass on effective practices within your environment to others. If you can do this, it accelerates the advancement of God's kingdom by preserving your wisdom for future generations. I believe this is the essence of being an educator.

One of the most enduring frameworks for understanding organizational change comes from psychologist Kurt Lewin, who proposed that meaningful change unfolds in three stages: Unfreeze, Change, and Refreeze (Lewin, 1947). In the Unfreeze stage, leaders must disrupt the status quo. This means helping staff recognize why current practices are no longer sufficient and building the motivation to let go of old habits. The Change stage is the transition itself, during which leaders introduce and practice new behaviors, systems, or mindsets, often amid uncertainty, resistance, or a temporary dip in performance as people adjust. Finally, in the Refreeze stage, the new practice becomes the norm. Routines, culture, and leadership support reinforce it, so staff don't revert to old patterns once the initial push for change fades. While Lewin's original model has been widely adopted, it has also been critiqued for oversimplifying what is, in practice, a far more fluid and iterative process (Cummings, Bridgman, & Brown, 2016). This is where the 4 P's model—Present, Promote, Practice, and Preserve—offers a complementary, practical lens. As a leader, you may have to “re-present.” You may be practicing one change while presenting the “next step.”

We, at ACSI, believe the Authentic Christian Educator addresses multiple pain points schools have shared regarding biblical worldview integration. However, applying this model is only as good as the school leader's ability to facilitate and manage change sustainably, without relying on the leader's authoritative presence within the school community. Just as it is important to get the building blocks in place in the correct order for BWI, the strategic sequencing matters just as much. Our advice? Present, Promote, Practice, and Preserve. Remember, it's a process. Get all the champions and gatekeepers on board early and begin your journey. The diligent hand will rule!