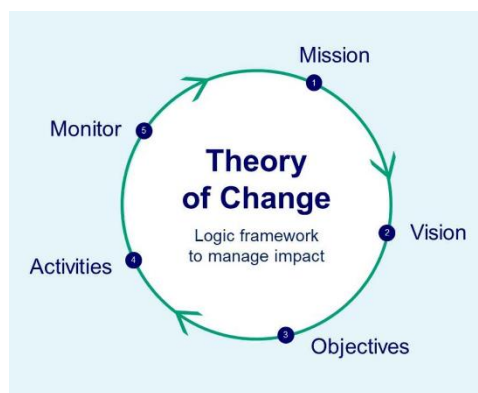


LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE—Leading the Journey

In July 2021, 83 education leaders in the Southwestern Union joined virtually for a week-long Leadership Institute focused on both academic leadership and operational responsibilities. Two facilitators from Learning Forward led the professional dialogue—Kay Psencik and Fred Brown. The learning was shaped by the three stances of a good leader: the change stance, the implementation stance, and the sustainability stance.

The facilitators recommended a book on change theory, *Finding Our Way* by Margaret J. Wheatley, that has altered our perspective on the importance of change. A theory of change is built on the concept that change is the organizing force in systems; structures and solutions are temporary. One critical stance regarding change is the willingness to be disturbed. Applied to organizations, CHANGE is a key concept in leadership; leaders must have the capacity to respond continuously to change.

Change theory is particularly applicable to one foundational component of an organization—VISION. In a blog on vision on the [SWUC education website](#), we noted that a vision should be flexible so it is reflective of the context of the times. In some ways, then, a vision is always in flux, which has a significant impact on continuous school improvement planning and implementation.



To effectively manage change, though, an organization needs a coherent center—MISSION—so it is able to sustain itself through turbulence. Because of the clarity of purpose that a mission provides, during times of change or as it is sometimes referred to in systems theory “chaos,” the organization can maintain its identity while adapting to new information.

During the change process, the vision components (curriculum, instruction, assessment, learning environment) become complex networks of relationships, important places for exchange and growth rather than boundaries. Organizations thrive in a zone of information processing, on a constantly changing edge between stability and chaos that has been dubbed “the edge of chaos.” In this dynamic region, new information can enter, but the organization retains its

identity. Living systems or organizations seek this far-from-equilibrium condition to stay alive.

Let's end with a poem by A. R. Ammons that captures the dynamic relationship between centers and vision (boundaries):

Don't establish the
boundaries
first
the squares, triangles,
boxes
of preconceived
possibility,
and then
pour life into them, trimming
off left-over edges, ending potential:
let centers
proliferate
from
self-justifying motions!