



Working through Resistance to Build Sustainable Infrastructure

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Building sustainable systems hinges on buy-in from all interest holders, but change can be challenging and new initiatives can elicit a range of reactions, including resistance. It can be unnerving to hear resistance to new initiatives, especially when there are implementation and outcome mandates for which we are held accountable. However, successful and sustained school improvement and transformation involve more than just convincing others to get on board. Similar to the community school strategy, frameworks designed to support multilingual learner and newcomer students need explicit commitment from formal leaders, practitioners, and a wide range of interest holders – students, families, teachers and community members. Real authentic partnership and sustainability mean welcoming resistance or skepticism as an opportunity to build trust, psychological safety, and shared understandings of the EL Roadmap policy.

These tools were adapted from pages 42-43, **Volume I EL Roadmap Implementation Guide and Toolkit for Administrators** in partnership with Californians Together and Community Schools Learning Exchange.

Responses to Resistance

New policies and initiatives can surface concern in teachers, staff, and families. Introducing the CA English Learner Roadmap may evoke a range of reactions like, *“What changes are they telling me I have to make? Do I believe this new direction is really in the best interests of our students? Will there be support for making those changes?”*

It *matters* how the Roadmap gets introduced to interest holders. It matters the degree to which administrators authentically support the Roadmap policy and genuinely engage staff and teachers around this work. Why? Because everyone’s voices and input needs to be included in school improvement efforts. When you present the English Learner Roadmap, be prepared for a variety of responses and questions. The following chart builds on implementation science research about the types of reactions you might expect, and ways you might respond so as to encourage continued participation.

| Type of Concerns | How it Presents | Ways to Respond |
|----------------------------------|--|---|
| About the purpose of the Roadmap | <p>“What I’m doing is working just fine. We don’t need a new policy, and I don’t need to change.”</p> <p>Staff and teachers may feel like this is “another thing” they have to do.</p> | <p>“Much of what we/you are doing already reflects the Roadmap. The policy is aligned with best practices and can affirm the good/hard work you/we have been doing. It’s a comprehensive policy, so let’s see if it helps us identify where else we can strengthen our work to continue striving to be the best school we can be.”</p> <p>Data can also help highlight the areas in which ML achievement and access are not what we want them to be.</p> |
| Informational gap | <p>“Hmmm. This is all new to me. I’d like to know more.”</p> <p>Staff and teachers may seem ambivalent or uninterested due to lack of relevant information on the policy.</p> | <p>“Great. That’s what we’re here to learn about. We’ll review how the policy can inform our work and what it means for you and our students.”</p> <p>Spending time learning about the different facets of the Roadmap can help teachers see themselves and their work in the broader strategy. Finding and visiting other schools actively engaged in the EL Roadmap implementation can also help teachers who are interested.</p> |
| Personal Impact | <p>“How will this affect me?”</p> <p>Uncertain about the policy’s demands, unsure of teachers’ ability to meet those demands, unsure what their role is supposed to be.</p> | <p>“This discussion is designed to help you (and all of us) hone in on what implementing this policy means for each of us and our students. We hope to get everyone on the same page about the purpose and value of shifting our practices, then to set some priorities for the kind of improvements we want to make. Of course, we hope you contribute your thoughts as we identify the kind of supports necessary to make this all possible.”</p> <p>Personal impact concerns signal confusion about individual vs. team efforts. By making learning a group endeavor, you can address issues of roles, expectations, and accountability with transparency that builds trust.</p> |
| Perceived Risk | <p>“Will they really let me teach this way? Is it allowed? Is it really a priority for our school and district?”</p> <p>Concern about conflicting expectations. Especially issues related to valuing a student’s home language may not be trusted.</p> | <p>“This policy has been adopted by the State Board of Education and Prop 58 mandates we implement it. It may feel new to us but it is research-based and it is a priority for us all now.”</p> <p>Engaging teachers in voicing their support for the Roadmap in terms of what they believe it can mean for their students—and defining what they need/want from the district—is important so they can be a force to push the district to invest and to make it a priority.</p> |

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| Work Management | <p>“I just can’t manage it! How do they expect me to do all of this, still cover the standards, and fit it into the year?”</p> <p>Attention is on the tasks and issues related to managing, scheduling and demands are paramount. Questions may arise around whether there will be support.</p> | <p>“It’s true that we will be doing new things, but there are many resources to understand what these changes will look like, and research-based recommendations for how to support our teachers and staff in adopting new strategies as a priority for our multilingual learner and newcomer work.”</p> <p>If this is a widespread or continuing concern, it means more attention should be paid to Principle #3 of the EL Roadmap policy (System Conditions that Support Effectiveness) and establishing a coaching and professional learning infrastructure to help teachers weave the Roadmap into their daily practices.</p> |
| About Payoff | <p>“How will this really impact my students? Will it truly meet their needs? Is it worth it?”</p> <p>Attention on relevance and impacts.</p> | <p>“We hope to get a work group together and develop some benchmarks and assessments for each school site. We know the principles are research-based but to see the impact on our campuses and in our students we’ll need to right-size our plan to we can see the impact we hope for”</p> <p>You may decide to select some articles for the faculty to read that lays the compelling rationale for how these approaches benefit students.</p> |
| Around Collaboration | <p>“How does this relate to everything else we are trying to do? How does it relate to what other teachers and grade levels are doing?”</p> <p>Focus is on how to coordinate with others in school or district.</p> | <p>“The CA EL Roadmap was designed to incorporate and align with the ELA/ELD Framework in particular, and can function across other initiatives and strategies like community schools—which teachers and schools are focusing on as well.”</p> <p>At the school site, it may help to do a crosswalk between major initiatives underway and where/how they align with the EL Roadmap.</p> |
| Longevity | <p>“How long will this last? Is it worth investing my time and effort into it, or will it just go away? Do they really mean it this time?”</p> <p>Concerns about wasting effort and about the shifting requests for teachers to work on new approaches.</p> | <p>“As California’s state policy for multilingual learners, it is expected to have longevity. The Roadmap itself will not go away anytime soon. However, the degree to which site administrators or district staff can remain focused on supporting implementation is a serious and legitimate question.”</p> <p>Local district resolutions, policies, and revised Master Plans can incorporate the Roadmap and go a long way toward assuring it is institutionalized. If your teachers are voicing continuing concerns about this issue, it is important for those voices to be heard at the district level, and for formal leaders to express their buy-in.</p> |
| Bias in beliefs | <p>“I just don’t believe that we should be supporting home languages or bilingualism. Schools should concentrate on English.”</p> <p>These beliefs ultimately create biased and inequitable education systems.</p> | <p>“California experienced two decades of English-Only policy and public campaigns, and this may be a new way of understanding language development for some. However, new research has shown that engaging and developing home languages alongside English is one of the strongest approaches to overall language and literacy development.”</p> <p>Sharing new research on school populations, linking new migration to old migration patterns, or information of long term ML student outcomes and achievement may be helpful.</p> |

