

## Overcoming Change Fatigue

Working in schools can be stressful!

These articles are intended to help the great people who work in schools.

### Key points

Change is a constant in schools

Frustration with failure to imbed change contributes to change fatigue

Our attitude and ability to learn are keys to effective implementation of change

Keep the intended outcome in mind

See change as a learning process

There is nothing permanent except change.

Heraclitus

Change just seems to be a constant in schools these days. Staff in many schools feel inundated by change and many are suffering change fatigue. Changes in curriculum, increased expectations and accountability measures, new administrative systems, pedagogical approaches and emerging technologies, just to name a few.

It is not uncommon for staff in schools to want the world to stand still for a moment so that we can consolidate and catch our breath. Whilst we might long for that, it is just not going to happen. If anything, the pace of change is likely to accelerate.

Schools are a reflection of society and therefore present the same symptoms – accelerating pace of life, rapidly developing technology, high expectations of an immediate response and an abundance of choices.

150 years ago Charles Darwin was right, *“It’s not the strongest of the species, nor the most intelligent that survive, but the ones most responsive to change”*. Longing for ‘good times’ of the past and hanging on to past practices without careful consideration is counter-productive.

Often it isn’t the change itself that is contributing to change fatigue. It is the frustration that a new change initiative is launched before the previous one is embedded.

In an endeavor to meet ever increasing expectations and striving for school improvement, schools are under pressure and are on the lookout for ‘an edge’, a panacea or a quick fix. *New shiny things* can be attractive when trying to respond to higher expectations and a changing society.

The keys to overcoming change fatigue are our attitude to the change and adopting a mindset that views change as learning, adapting and building from our previous skills and knowledge rather than seeing the change as something completely new.

Keeping the intended purpose of the change initiative in mind is important to maintaining our focus and persisting. Identify the intended benefit of the change and work towards achieving it. It is important that in implementing a change we are aspiring to something better.

Staff who work in schools are experts in learning. We need to see implementing change as a learning process. For learning to occur we need to be open to other ways of doing things, feel confident enough in our own ability to take some risks and refine or improve our current approach and get started. Some staff suffer change fatigue because they talk about change, complain about change and spend their energy resisting change but never actually make the change. They procrastinate and complain but never actually modify their existing practice. This procrastination contributes to the fatigue and eventually catches up with them as the gap between their existing practice and the intended practice becomes too great!

In implementing change we have three choices – bury our head in the sand and hope it goes away, spend our energy resisting and fighting change or get involved in steering the change to achieve the intended outcome. I know where I prefer to spend my energy!

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