

Technical and Adaptive Challenges in Schools

Resource: Technical Problems vs. Adaptive Challenges. Eric Svaren. Groupsmith. Adapted from Ronald A. Heifetz & Donald L. Laurie, "The World of Leadership," *Harvard Business Review*. January-February 1997; and Ronald A. Heifetz & Marty Linsky, *Leadership on the Line*, Harvard Business School Press, 2002

Available at <http://www.groupsmith.com/uploads/file/technical%20problems%20vs%20%20adaptive%20challenges.pdf>

Reaction Questions:

1. What is meant by technical challenges?
2. What does it mean to apply an adaptive or human approach to problem solving?
3. Why are adaptive solutions important for your stakeholders?
4. Are stakeholders, especially students with disabilities and families, provided with meaningful opportunities to be involved related to technical problems and adaptive challenges, including staying informed and providing input? These opportunities include training on the process, on leadership, and on speaking with confidence.
5. What type of discussion do we want to have?
6. Is there a common vocabulary for promoting dialogue among stakeholder groups?
7. Are there common frameworks?
8. What does it look like to succeed in applying the adaptive side to our problem?
9. How do make sure that the language we're using is accessible to those involved so that all stakeholders can be productively involved? (e. g., avoiding use of acronyms, education jargon and "loaded" language) Every group tends to exclude others.
10. Why do people gravitate toward technical solutions and avoid adaptive solutions?

Application Questions:

1. What's different in our context that needs to be paid attention to when implementing the technical solution?
 - a. How do we adapt contextual differences without losing fidelity?
 - b. How do technical solutions that have been applied in one situation help us to use adaptive solutions in another setting?
2. What data are important as the basis of reaction and application questions? Do we have access to the data?
3. How do we help others learn these skills?
4. What are the risks in moving from technical solutions to adaptive solutions and helping others move the solutions through to practice?
5. How does addressing the adaptive challenges impact implementing technical solutions?
6. As a first step, how do you build the trust necessary for people to be vulnerable? Adaptive solutions require vulnerability, transparency about own perspectives, staying engaged while disagreeing.
7. How can we use technology to build relationships with people who are going to work together? How can youth teach adults how to maximize the use of social networking?
8. How can school and community based agencies work together in developing and implementing adaptive solutions?
9. How are all stakeholders made to feel as part of the group?
10. How can we evaluate the technical solution to see if it's a good fit? How do we need to adapt it for our context?

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