

# THE POINT PLAN

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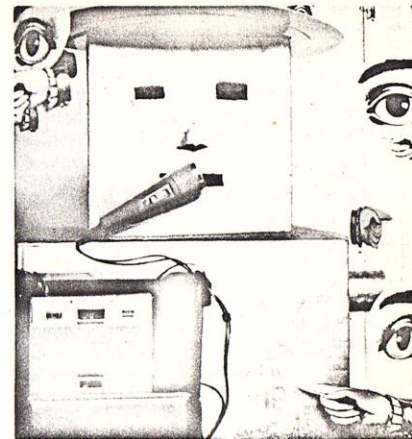
A STRATEGY FOR  
BRINGING ABOUT  
CHANGE

Roger L. Harrell

*Teachers*

*Supervisors*

*Administrators*



*Business Executives*

*Organization Officers*

*Church Leaders*

## About the Author

Roger L. Harrell, Chairman, Graduate Secondary Programs, Department of Education, Texas A&M University, earned his doctorate in education at the University of New Mexico. In addition to university teaching he has been a teacher and a director of curriculum and instruction in the public schools.



Dr. Harrell served as a Special Assistant to the Chief of the Innovative Centers Branch, Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education, United States Office of Education, in a recent cooperative career program in Washington.

He has recently created two television programs, one entitled "*The Point Plan*," to be used in conjunction with this booklet and "*A Happy Start*" dealing with Early Childhood Education. This program was awarded a Broadcast Media Award at the 18th Annual Broadcast Industry Conference at San Francisco, California.

Dr. Harrell has lectured on the dynamics of change processes at statewide conferences in several states.

## About the Booklet

This booklet is designed to acquaint the reader with processes of change. A vocabulary common to change literature is used. It is recommended that the user study the glossary in advance of the reading or as needed for clarification.

The planned change strategy advocated herein should be easily adapted by teachers, supervisors, administrators, business executives, organization officers or church leaders.

Whenever the word "system" is used the reader should mentally scrutinize it in terms of his own "social" setting — groups or organizations devoted to the achievement of goals.

An extensive bibliography is included in this publication. It should serve as a springboard into other references for those desiring to become more adept with change strategies and processes.

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# AN INVOLVEMENT STRATEGY

*Consider the way by which a new study is introduced into the curriculum. Someone feels that the school system of his (or quite frequently nowadays her) town is falling behind the times. There are rumors of great progress in education being made elsewhere. Something new and important has been introduced; education is being revolutionized by it; the superintendent and board become uneasy; the matter is taken up by individuals and clubs; pressure is brought to bear on the school's system; letters are written to the newspapers . . . editorials appear; finally the school board ordains that on and after a certain date the particular new branch . . . shall be taught in the public schools. The victory is won, and everybody . . . unless it be some already overburdened and distracted teacher . . . congratulates everybody else, that such advance steps are taken.*

The above quotation sounds as if it came from the year 1968. However, it belongs to John Dewey

*John Dewey . . . 1901*

in the year 1901. He perceived a need for a systematic way of bringing an innovation into a school district.

Why does change meet with acceptance in one community and almost totally fail in another? Is it possible that an approach can be taken to help assure that a specific change may be successfully brought into the community and have a quality of "durability" about it?

The hands and eyes on the front cover signify vision and direction. Or do they? You may infer a lack of direction and vision.

Their meaning is more uncertain than certain. This is often the way change "happens" in our complex society.

When we provide leadership to programs of change does our clientele see us going in several insignificant directions or do members of the client

# INTERACTION

system perceive us as being on course? Do they view us with positive or negative sight? Should we plan change, or should we just let it happen?

Expression is the American way of life. Man uniquely acquires communicative skills, essential to expression, from the societal environment in which he is found. Footprints in the sands of time are his legacy only if he develops the art of interaction with his environment and fellow beings.

The most poignant example of interaction is that of the blind music professor who said, "I want to see the Grand Canyon," and upon being led to the canyon's edge exclaimed, "My, what a glorious sight!" Only the blind can really understand the significance of his statement. It would be wonderful if this kind of interaction permeated our workday group environment!

Happiness is dreaming a little, coming up with a creative idea and getting your system to accept

it. Communication is the art of knowing how to get it accepted. To communicate is to plan and carry out involvement strategies. This suggests a model. A model is a general plan of action or design with specific devices and alternate strategies which may be thought of as a prescribed sequence of procedures, each step presupposing the completion of the other. The construction of a model brings into focus measures taken to effect the change or to get the system to adopt your idea.

*Interaction*

*Expression*

*Communication*

# SOCIAL ACTION

The implementation of any process model demands social action. Social action is the organization of efforts aimed at getting people to recognize a problem or need, see it as worthy of efforts, and work out a change solution. Social action may be thought of as comprehensive steps developed within a change model. A plan of effective change strategy is now suggested. It is called the POINT Plan.

The POINT Plan can serve as a guide to classroom teachers, administrators, supervisors, business executives, officers of service organizations, and church leaders. The POINT Plan is an involvement strategy. Learning in the classroom may be enhanced by a teacher who knows how to involve students.

With modifications any classroom teacher should be able to utilize the POINT Plan for more

effective instruction. Involvement creates interest. Interest facilitates learning.

POINT demands the services of a *Change Agent* within the system who, among other things, assesses and evaluates existing programs and procedures within the organization in light of changing goals in our complex society.

*Organized Efforts Limited*

*At Getting People*

*To See A Need*

# THE CHANGE AGENT

The *Change Agent* should characteristically fit the pattern and be in possession of the following qualifications:

1. He should be conversant with innovative processes and should be capable of both boldness and caution in instigating change.
2. He should be cognizant of similarities and differences in change processes in several fields such as medicine, agriculture, industry, and education.
3. To coin an acronym, he should be: Courageous, Responsive, Enlightened, Able, Tactful, Inspirational, Vigorous, and Enthusiastic. This spells *CREATIVE*.

In educational changes the primary *change agent* is usually one who is in a position of authority in the central office. Such a person might be des-

ignated as an *Instructional Communicator*. He is a master of communicative skills. He knows that expression without impact is meaningless in terms of long or short range changes. He inspires faculty and staff to develop new and exciting curricula and has the know-how to carry an idea for change to fruition

Paul Mort once said, "Unlike the weather, adapting schools to changing needs is something everybody does something about and nobody talks about." The *Instructional Communicator* gives planning and direction to educational change. He does not engage in change processes without knowing why or how. He does not devote himself to the concoction of highly theoretical schemes for educational change, knowing that education practitioners do not have time to decipher theories in which there is doubt. This does not mean that *classroom teachers*

# MAKE SOMETHING HAPPEN!

must sit back and wait for change to happen. They should *assert* themselves. Examples of how this may be accomplished follow in this booklet.

The POINT process model is constructed to "Make Something Happen." It mandates a strategy for the creation of an awareness of need (change idea) and the mechanics to work out a solution to the need significantly within the system.

*Instructional Communicator*

*Agent of Change*

*Teachers Should Act*

## POINT — Pre-Initiation

The first stage of POINT is a checklist of assumptions, all significant action steps which should have been or will be completed by the *Change Agent* and others in key positions before subsequent stages may effectively be established.

### THE ASSUMPTIONS ARE:

1. The *Change Agent* has made every attempt to understand the organizational structure and has identified the number of relevant group representatives in their roles of membership and leadership in the system.
2. Public records, news media, minutes of the system's meetings, personal contacts and observations have been used to determine broad organizational bias, preferences, and educational and professional levels.
3. The backgrounds of the board members or leaders in civic and service organizations

# IS THE CHANGE NEEDED?

have been studied to ascertain their political, socio-economic, cultural and educational inclinations.

4. Formal and informal communicative patterns have been established within the system.
5. The *Change Agent* and personnel in key positions in the system have engaged in the study of research findings, surveyed the professional literature, and have been provided the opportunity of coming into contact with authoritative and consultative personnel in order that they may keep abreast of times and be more amenable to significant and needed change.

A classroom teacher acting in the capacity as a change agent would have modified the above suggestions and adapted them to his students, colleagues, supervisory personnel, administrators, parents, community leaders, and others who will be affected by the change.

## POINT — On Beginning

The *Change Agent* has an idea for change, either his or one of which he has heard or read. He begins to talk with a few key and trusted people about it. He carefully scrutinizes the idea in terms of origin and present and future potential capabilities to enforce the idea. He uses any resistance to the idea as a diagnostic tool to identify problems which may be in need of immediate attention, even to the point of negating or modifying the idea as originally conceived.

Questions are asked . . . Are we sure the idea we have is a feasible one? Is it really worthwhile?

## Initiation

# A STATEMENT OF NEED

The board members or officers are apprized of the idea on an informal basis, official action or adoption by the board members or officers of the system is not sought at this time in order to prevent the members of the system from feeling that they are being forced to accept the idea of change.

After an idea for change is well formulated in the mind of the *Change Agent*, he should seek to get action initiated by key members, called *Primary Initiators*. Those members are selected to act in this capacity to promote the feeling that "they" are responsible for the change idea. The *Change Agent* should attempt to secure a *statement of need* from a Primary Initiator, whose function

is to initiate enthusiasm for the change. Some would call this manipulation — some would call it psychological persuasion. It should be moral and ethical in every respect. The strategy is very simply this: Do not present ideas in an autocratic way. *Your strategy is to listen and when you talk use words which will cause someone in the group to suggest what you are thinking.* In all ensuing meetings, the *Change Agent* should emphasize a statement such as "Some of our members have suggested this idea. What do you think?" This is not an immoral type of manipulation or psychological persuasion. During the next stage of the process model, key members will be invited to give sanction to your idea.

# PARTICIPATION

Teachers wanting to initiate a classroom change should elicit student involvement at this stage in the POINT PLAN. Students, in this case, are called *Primary Initiators*. They can do much for the sake of change if they feel it is a change which will benefit them and the system.

Students will "feel" the democratic process when *first* a statement of need is secured from them. Students who are respected for their participation and involvement will respect those who are providing leadership to the movement.

*Involve Students*

If the classroom teacher feels that something needs to be changed within the system, he has two alternatives. First, he should communicate with his principal in an attempt to convince him that the change is needed. For example, he may believe that team teaching is an innovation needed in the school in which he is teaching. Excitement about the possibility of a new program should influence the principal. He should be encouraged to bring it to the attention of the *Change Agent* in the central office. Most forward looking principals will take this initiative. Then, the agent of change can carry it to fruition through implementation of POINT.

*Involve Employees*

# AN ALTERNATIVE

An alternative necessarily exists when the principal fails to respond to the enthusiasm of the teacher requesting change. That alternative is for the teacher to request an audience with the *Instructional Communicator* in the central office. Generally this is the director of curriculum and instruction or the superintendent of schools, depending on the size of the school. The change idea should be discussed at the meeting. This should permit the primary change agent (central office staff member) to pursue a strategy of change. The "O" stage of the POINT process is extremely important. This is the beginning of genuine involvement.

When the *Instructional Communicator* becomes convinced that team teaching is a needed change he will proceed with the steps as set forth in the POINT model.

*Employees Have A*

*Responsibility To Make*

*Themselves Heard Through*

*Proper Channels*

# LEGITIMATION

## POINT — Invitation to Sanction

Legitimation of the idea for change should now be sought from the key people in the formal and informal power groups of the system. This stage becomes a mental pretest phase of the change. The rationale of the new approach (change idea) should be clearly presented.

Support from the board members or officers becomes essential at this point. However, formal approval and/or acceptance should not yet be obtained. If board members or officers are objecting to the change and cannot be convincingly persuaded by the *Change Agent* or *Primary* or *Secondary Initiators*, it can only mean that the idea has not been sanctioned. An idea for change which has not been

properly legitimized should be discarded and the second phase "O" reenacted with a reformulated "Change Need" if indeed, the idea is needed.

The classroom teacher (secondary change agent) should now "feel the pulse" of student leaders, principals, supervisors and other administrative personnel. The principal should be willing to pursue the change idea with the *Instructional Communicator*. If he is unwilling to do so, it can only mean that the change has not been legitimized and he is likely not to support it. If response from other administrators, supervisory personnel, teachers and students is strongly in favor of the change, the teacher should seek direct support from the *Instructional Communicator*. Again, the principal should

# SEEK DIRECT SUPPORT

be requested to attend a meeting or meetings with the *Instructional Communicator* at which time the idea for change is again explained by the teacher. The aim is to secure full central office and other administrative legitimization of the idea before entering the next phase of POINT. Unless the school principal is willing to support the change it is unlikely that the change will experience success.

From this time forward, the teacher must place complete confidence in the change agent at the administrative level (central office-*Instructional Communicator*). The teacher who had the idea for change will be most instrumental in its adoption

but does not generally have the authority, resources, or time to promote change. However, he can enhance the possibility of the adoption of his idea by meaningful participation as a member of the *Diffusion Set*. His relationship and team efforts with the agent of change in the central office and with his principal will greatly affect the chances of successful adoption of the idea.

We now make an assumption that the idea has been properly legitimized. At this point, those in charge of common sense changes many times make the mistake of formally announcing the change idea and putting the plan for change into action.

Tactful Legitimation

Plan

Seek

Act

## A SECOND LOOK

A second look reveals that there is really no plan for implementing a change which will stand the test of time. Common sense strategies often break down here. So much preliminary planning has gone into the three preceding stages there is a tendency to skip one of the most important stages at which genuine *Planning For Action* occurs. For emphasis the next phase of POINT is titled, Not Yet! Plan!

### POINT — Not Yet! Plan

Once the idea for change has been legitimized, it should be diffused throughout the organization by action-minded people called the *Diffusion Set*. The *Diffusion Set* should be composed of key members within the system, and *selected members* of the board or officers of the system, all of whom have given sanction to the idea and are enthusiastic toward the anticipated change.

*Planning Prevents*

At this stage, a determination should be made by the *Diffusion Set* to see if members of the system feel the need of the proposed change and to see if they will define it as such.

*Change Failure*

The *Diffusion Set* should function to make the need for change the problem of the interested persons within the system.

# OBJECTIVES

A selected public relations campaign should be initiated within the system. Techniques should be devised to get interested and influential members to see the need of the change idea and identify it as one of their own. Strategic committees are formed. A commitment to action should be obtained from key members once they have defined the need for change. Those who are "committed to action" are those who will "stand up and be counted".

This marks the beginning of another series of meetings in which objectives and goals of the change are formulated and an appropriate organizational structure for carrying out the change is developed. Instruments and procedures should be designed at this time to assure immediate feedback to the *Change Agent*.

## POINT — This Is It! Action

Once the plan for change is spelled out, there should be a general mobilization and organization of resources in terms of time, people, physical facilities, and whatever else is needed to carry the plan into action.

Formal approval by the board members or officers should be obtained now and the program should officially be launched. News media should be encouraged to give full coverage with emphasis given to the change.

*Diffusion Set*

*Secures Commitment*

# EVALUATION DECISION MAKING PLANNING ACTION

Professional mass media techniques should be employed to tell the story to assure continued member involvement and participation. A "Blanket Campaign" for change should be initiated throughout the system.

Reiteration of familiar and fully accepted goals of the former process should permeate this phase of endeavor, providing linkage of the innovation or change program to established goals. All public relations efforts should be aimed at conveying the notion that the system is constantly seeking new and better ways of improvement yet continues to practice that which has traditionally proven valid and meritorious.

This stage of POINT should include continuing evaluation, not only of the change, but of the prin-

ciples involved in bringing about the change.

Evaluative reports contain reaction statements by officers and members. Authorities outside the system should be called upon to assess the effectiveness of the change. Findings should be shared with the general membership.

This POINTED change process is a strategy which requires the highly skilled services of an able *Change Agent*. POINT necessitates continual planning, evaluation, decision making and action every step of the way.

Any strategy may obviously give way to several alternative strategies as the process of change is undertaken; however, the POINT in case is that strategies do not just happen. Strategies are planned. A strategy *makes something happen!*

# GLOSSARY

*Adaptability* — the capacity of a school district to respond to change in order to meet the educational needs of the youth within the district.

*Adoption process* — the various stages of subjective dispositions relative to the acceptance or rejection of an idea for change.

*Change Agent* — anyone who gives leadership to influence adoption of decisions which he feels to be right, usually, a central office administrator.

*Client system and/or clientele* — those people in a social system for whom the change is intended.

*Climate of opinion* — the prevailing attitude of the school-community complex — the pulse of society, an awareness of things as they are happening, a measure of the climate of opinion.

*Comprehensive education* — a system of public education designed to meet the needs of all youth — the student of vocation as well as the student of academic subjects.

*Diffusion process* — the methods and means by which an idea and/or change spreads from its inception to its adopters or ultimate users.

*Diffusion rate* — the amount of time for an innovation or educational change to spread from a given locale to another.

*Diffusion set* — selected persons in key positions within the system who have given full sanction to the change idea. The diffusion set functions to make the need for change that of other key persons within the system. This set attempts to get a definition of need from the client system.

# GLOSSARY

*Educational change*— a partial or whole alteration in pattern of an on-going educational system.

*Educational change process* — the methods and means by which an educational system or entity is altered in pattern or form.

*Process model*— a general plan of action or design for bringing about a desired educational change. A model has specific devices and alternate strategies which vary from one locale to another.

*Educational system* — a collection of interdependent parts of a social system having definite boundaries, given to the accomplishment of educational goals.

*Innovation* — the introduction of a new element idea or method into a system.

*Instructional communicator* — a primary change agent. School personnel knowledgeable in curriculum and instruction and public relations. Generally, a person who is on the central office or supervisory staff.

*Opinion leaders* — those to whom others look for information and advice.

*Personality system* — an individual or group of individuals having needs, predispositions, a set of past experiences and unique values.

# GLOSSARY

*Planned change* — purposeful decisions to bring about improvement in personality or social systems.

*Primary initiators* — key people in the system who act as change agents, spreading enthusiasm and excitement about a change idea. In educational change, primary initiators are generally key teachers. Administrative and supervisory personnel, excluding the instructional communicators, are referred to as secondary initiators. Initiators may be counted upon to give full support and sanction to the change idea.

*Resistance* — an on-going mental decision to reject an idea for change.

*School* — a social institution made up of structural elements — subjects, personnel, methods, times,

places — all of which are interrelated and functioning to provide education for youth of the community.

*School community complex, the school district* — persons, groups, or organizations within a specified boundary.

*Social action* — socially organized efforts to change a social institution; those steps employed to bring about a desired alteration of pattern in an educational system.

*Social system* — a composite of persons, groups or organizations devoted to the achievement of goals.

*Strategy* — a planned sequence of activities aimed at accomplishing a set goal.

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