

Introduced in *The Influential School Leader* by Charles Murphy and John D’Auria, the framework below helps leaders better understand and address complex problems. Part I helps you better *understand* the problem and Part II lays the groundwork for change.

THE INFLUENTIAL SCHOOL LEADER FRAMEWORK			
The 4 Perspectives			
*** Superintendent *** Principal *** Teachers and Staff *** Students and Families ***			
The 3 Dimensions			
<i>Surface-Level: behaviors and actions</i>	<i>Below-the-Surface: feelings and emotions</i>	<i>System: values and beliefs</i>	
The 4 Conditions for Change			
<i>Safety</i>	<i>Belonging</i>	<i>Communication</i>	<i>Experimentation</i>

Part I – Improving Your Vision: Using Two Lenses to Better View Complex Problems

Before leaders start to *address* complex problems, it is vital that they take the time to first *understand* them. Below are **two lenses** that are extremely important in helping leaders better understand problems from different perspectives.

The first lens that helps leaders better understand a complex problem is referred to as “the four distinct perspectives.” Imagine a scenario in which 100 teachers received letters that their contracts would not be renewed for the upcoming school year. This is a complex issue. The idea of this lens is that in order for educational leaders to fully understand a complex problem (like the termination notices), they must look at it from the perspectives of the following four groups whose perspectives almost always impact an issue:

- **Senior Management** – Superintendents and other district-wide leaders
- **Middle Management** – Principals and K-12 directors
- **Line Workers** – Teachers
- **Customers/Clients** – Students, families, and members of the community

The second lens that can help school leaders better understand problems and lead through change is the “three dimensions.” Every problem can be seen through three dimensions and all dimensions should be considered in addressing the problem:

1. *Surface-level dimension:* Behaviors and actions
2. *Below-the-surface dimension:* Feelings and attitudes
3. *System dimension:* Beliefs and values

Part II – The Four Conditions Needed for Complex Change

4 Conditions for Change			
1. Safety	2. Belonging	3. Communication	4. Experimentation

Groups simply can’t function without **psychological safety**. Professor Amy Edmondson says: “Psychological safety is broadly defined as a climate in which people are comfortable expressing and being themselves. More specifically, when people have psychological safety at work, they feel comfortable sharing concerns and mistakes without fear of embarrassment or retribution.” Further, it is psychological safety that allows us to adapt and act with nimbleness in a quickly-changing world. But psychological safety does *not* mean that members are free to do whatever they want. They must also take responsibility for their mistakes so the organization can *learn from them*. To see true change, leaders need to balance psychological safety with accountability.

A **sense of belonging** helps staff feel the trust needed for them to learn, grow, experiment, and make errors. When they feel they belong, staff are more likely to remain at the school, engage in activities, and recruit others to work at the school. Without a sense of belonging staff are more likely to experience resentment, divisiveness, and burnout.

The third condition necessary for change is **open and honest communication**. Without it, leaders make decisions and shape policies based on limited data and a limited understanding of the challenges they face. Unfortunately, in many schools, teachers are afraid to share their opinions because they fear it will jeopardize their reputation, relationships, or job security.

The fourth and final condition necessary for change is **encouraging experimentation**. Ideally, we want educators to view their work as a series of experiments designed to improve instruction and maximize student achievement. *Encouraging experimentation* is based on the belief that school improvement is like scientific inquiry: with each new lesson or unit, teachers make calculated changes to improve teaching and learning. Teachers are, in essence, “scientists of learning.” They create lesson plans, teach, assess student learning, discuss results with colleagues, and adjust the next lesson based on the data. Our goal as leaders is to help every teacher value this process of discovery and see themselves as capable *scientists*.

When leaders take the time to see problems through the above two lenses and establish the above four conditions for change, they are more likely to succeed in addressing problems and introducing new changes and initiatives to their schools and districts.