

**“We Find Time for What We Value”
Exploring our Immunities to Change
Illinois SAMs Conference
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**Protocols and Templates
(Adapted from *Change Leadership* by Wagner, et. al)
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Step 1: Identify Your Commitment

Think of it this way:

- What one or two aspects of your own role, if you were to dedicate yourself to them, would make the biggest contribution toward improving instruction in your district?

AND

- What is the most important thing that you need to get better at, or should change, in order to make progress toward this goal?

Then frame this as a commitment by completing this sentence stem:

- I am committed to the value or importance of....

Step 2: Recognize Counter-productive Behaviors

Answer this question:

- What am I doing, or not doing, this is keeping my commitment from being more fully realized?

When answering this, use these guidelines:

Keep your list to specific behaviors (e.g., “too many interruptions” becomes “I let myself be interrupted frequently”)

Refrain from listing your reasoning about why you engage in these behaviors or what you should do about them

List only those behaviors (or things you are not doing) that undermine or work against your commitment)

Doing

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Not Doing

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Step 3: Identify Competing Commitments

Next:

- A. Go to your Doing/Not Doing template on the previous page and imagine what it would be like to do the exact opposite of them.
- B. Note any (and all) uncomfortable feelings that emerge for you as you think about doing exactly the opposite of those behaviors. For example, do you feel uneasy if you imagine yourself not doing the things you are doing?
- C. This space of uneasiness is called disequilibrium. It's where true change can occur.
- D. Identify your "competing commitment(s)" by filling in this sentence stem: "I am also committed to:" (This is a commitment that unconsciously protects you from having to feel the feelings you identified above. Examples might be "I am also committed to not looking stupid in front of the board;" "I am committed to avoiding having a fierce conversation with the (popular high school principal) because I fear the community backlash;" I am committed to avoiding walk-throughs because I don't know what I'm doing and I fear that will be exposed". It is best thought of as an "I fear..." statement.
- E. Once you've identified your competing commitment, look at our original commitment and your competing commitments together. This is your "immunity to change."

Step 4: Name Your Big Assumption

First, a description: Your big assumption is what actively holds your immune system in place, keeping you from the change you are committed to making.

Now, do this:

- Take your sentence that began with “I am committed to...” and replace the words “I am committed to” with the words “I assume that if...”

- Then complete these new sentence stems that begin with “I assume that if...”. For example, I assume that if the board finds out I don’t know much about curriculum, instruction, and assessment, then they will lose confidence in me as a leader, and I will lose my job.” **This is your Big Assumption.**

You’ll know you’ve identified your big assumption accurately if writing it has a stomach-tightening effect. Your big assumption should:

- show why your step 3 commitment feels absolutely necessary
- end disastrously
- reflect a constricted world where danger lurks

Step 5: Learn How to Overcome Your Big Assumption

This is where your real work begins. Use Figure 10-2 “Guide sheet for designing a good test of the big assumption” from the book *Immunity to Change: How to Overcome It and Unlock the Potential in Yourself and Your Organization* by Kegan and Lahey (2009, Harvard Press) to learn how to overcome your big assumption.

The Change Leadership authors organize this work into a template they call the Four Column Immunity Map. It is replicated here. You can use this as a template for your work in testing your big assumption.

1	2	3	4
Commitment	Doing/Not Doing	Competing Commitment	Big Assumption