

LEADERSHIP Douglas B. Reeves

Envision a Better Future

Change is uncomfortable, so stop asking your community to buy in to the latest reform. Instead, inspire them to meet the challenge of making painful but necessary changes

When I ask people to tell me the imperatives for effective systemic change, one of the most frequent responses is that “you have to get buy-in from all the stakeholders.” I would like to challenge that notion.

Elected policymakers, such as school board members, often are expected to

change their beliefs and practices. A great deal of traditional professional development is based on this dubious premise.

Cognitive psychology, however, provides a different model for behavioral change. The nicotine addict won't wait for buy-in but stops smoking even when

consultants or authority figures.

Buy-in is an illusion

When leaders tell me they have buy-in for their latest systemic change, then I know one of two things to be true. First, and most likely, they are not really asking for a significant change.

Significant changes in professional practices represent painful losses and an acknowledgement that past practices were not as effective as we thought. Change represents loss, even a small death, the sacrifice of closely held and reassuring habits and practices. If you think you have buy-in, then chances are very high that you are not asking for a

For further information:

<http://www.leadandlearn.com/sites/default/files/articles/1205-asbj-envision-better-future.pdf>