



A Perspective of Change From Research and Experience

Change

“We saw repeatedly that the leadership and management of change was a matter of dealing with

- ★ uncertainty
- ★ complexity
- ★ turbulence
- ★ and the cussedness of many different people.”

Matthew Miles

(Commenting on his four year in-depth study of five high schools and a national survey of 178 big-city high school principals -- all carrying out serious improvement efforts.)

What is Change?

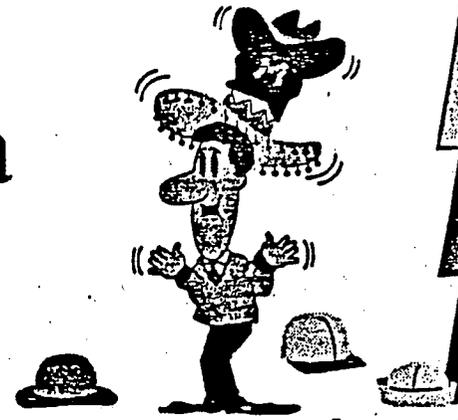
- ∞ New Materials
- ∞ New Behaviors/
Practices
- ∞ New Beliefs/
Understandings

Michael Fullan, 1990

Responding to Change

- ★ We try to hold on to what is comfortable and reliable, and what makes sense to us.
- ★ We attempt to consolidate our skills and what is familiar to us in order to assure ourselves that we can master something new.
- ★ We seek personal meaning in any change we are expected to assimilate.

Fundamental change requires a leader who can ...



- ★ define the need for change and enable individuals to construct personal meaning about why the change is needed;
- ★ articulate a compelling vision of the organization's future and enable individuals to create a shared sense of purpose about how to achieve the vision; and
- ★ mobilize commitment and energize action to achieve purposes and ultimately transform the organization.

- Noel M. Tichy and Mary Anne Devanna,
The Transformational Leader, 1990.



Transforming an organization
involves joys and sorrows,
benefits and losses,
camaraderie and
abandonment.

These phenomena are
part of renewal, for what
worked in the past may
have become the cause
or failure in the present.

- Noel M. Tichy and Mary Anne Devanna,
The Transformational Leader, 1990.



To the extent that
change involves
uncertainty, most
people have
difficulty facing it ...

As organizations try to
change, they must learn
to deal fairly with the
anxieties and criticisms
of [those] who will have
to adapt to change.

- Noel M. Tichy and Mary Anne Devanna,
The Transformational Leader, 1990.

As the organization moves through its three phases of change, individuals simultaneously move through their own three phases of change:

- endings
 - transitions
 - new beginnings
-
-



Statements About Change

This has been a long journey. I believe there's far more clarity in our knowledge of change in schools than we had 40 years ago. Yet, it could be said, if we're so smart, why ain't we rich? There are many unsolved questions both in the theory and practice of school change—how we understand it and how we do it.

—Merrill Miles, "40 Years of Change in Schools: Some Personal Reflections," p. 29

Leaders who attempt organizational change often find themselves unwittingly caught in balancing processes. To the leaders, it looks as though their efforts are clashing with sudden resistance that seems to come from nowhere. . . . The resistance is a response by the system, trying to maintain an implicit system goal. Until this goal is recognized, the change effort is doomed to failure. So long as the leader continues to be the "model," his work habits will set the norm. Either he must change his habits, or establish new and different models.

Whenever there is "resistance to change," you can count on there being one or more "hidden" balancing processes. Resistance to change is neither capricious nor mysterious. It almost always arises from threats to traditional norms and ways of doing things. Often these norms are woven into the fabric of established power relationships. The norm is entrenched because the distribution of authority and control is entrenched. Rather than pushing harder to overcome resistance to change, artful leaders discern the source of the resistance. They focus directly on the implicit norms and power relationships within which the norms are embedded.

—Peter M. Senge, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*, p. 88

It is obvious that the process of intervention is complex. One of the biggest traps for large-system change efforts is the failure of organizational leaders to resist the temptation to rush through the planning process to get to the "action" stage. Although the pressures for immediate results often arise from a need to eliminate the acute negative consequences of the problem, it has been our experience that a great portion of large-system change efforts fail due to a lack of understanding on the part of the organizational leadership of what the process of intervention and change involves. When the manager lacks an appreciation for and understanding of the true complexity of the intervention process, it is predictable that the emphasis will be on "action" or results. Management must gain a basic understanding of the whats, hows, and whys of the change management process, and be able to recognize its developmental and interdependent nature, as a necessary condition for success in planned change efforts.

—Richard Beckhard and Reuben T. Harris, *Organizational Transitions: Managing Complex Change* (2d ed.), p. 116

Confusion is a word we have invented for an order which is not understood.

—Henry Miller

The world in which organizations exist, and will be operating for the rest of this century, is continuously in change: change in relationships among nations, institutions, business partners, and organizations; change in the makeup of the "haves" and "have nots"; change in dominant values and norms governing society and our institutions; change in the character and culture of business or wealth-producing organizations; change in how work is done; change in priorities about how we spend our time and our lives.

—Richard Beckhard and Reuben T. Harris, *Organizational Transitions: Managing Complex Change* (2d ed.), p. 1

It's not so much that we're afraid of change or so in love with the old ways, but it's that place in between that we fear. . . . It's like being in between trapezes. It's Linus when his blanket is in the dryer. There's nothing to hold on to.

—Marilyn Ferguson

Sales begins with a product and then endeavors to persuade customers that they want or need what the product offers. The tools of sales are advertising, promotion, and incentives. Marketing, however, begins with the customer—what the customer values and what the customer needs. Effective marketing organizations are effective because they relate their production capacities to what their customers value.

Too often, those who try to bring about change approach the task as a sales problem. Just as sales tries to break down market resistance to a new product, leaders of change concentrate on overcoming resistance to change. Just as sales organizations spend time and energy on advertising and finding ways to manipulate the customer to adopt a positive frame of mind toward the product, leaders of change spend time trying to make others believe that their proposals will be in the customer's own best interest or serve some value the customer wants served.

Marketing change, by contrast, begins from the view that change must satisfy the needs and values of those whose support is essential. Marketing change proceeds from the assumption that overcoming resistance to change is not the same as creating commitment to change. It is one thing to get people to tolerate change; it is another to get them to support change with their own time, energy, and creative capacities. If schools are to be transformed from their present structures to more productive forms, those who lead change must take a marketing approach rather than the approach of the salesperson.

—Phillip C. Schlechty, *Schools for the Twenty-First Century*, p. 84

Those who would lead change need to consider the symbols they use to communicate their vision. Change leaders should never create losers unless they intend to dismiss them from the organization. Losers may not be able to do much else, but they surely can sabotage.

—Phillip C. Schlechty, *Schools for the Twenty-First Century*, p. 89

In a time of drastic change, it is the learners who inherit the future. The learned find themselves equipped to live in a world that no longer exists.

—Eric Hoffer

In other words, change is not a fully predictable process. The answer is found not by seeking ready made guidelines, but by struggling to understand and modify events and processes that are intrinsically complicated, difficult to pin down, and ever changing.

—Michael G. Fullan with Suzanne Stiegelbauer, *The New Meaning of Educational Change*, pp. 107-108

Change requires commitment of energy and resources. It requires people to take risks and break habits. It causes discomfort and uncertainty. It creates needs as well as satisfies them. When undergoing change, people need more support and security than when their world is stable; these needs must be satisfied for substantial change to go forward.

Identifying the customers' needs and values and then finding ways of satisfying them is what marketing is all about. Those who would lead change must understand that, in the best sense, those they would lead are customers. What the leader wants from the customer is commitment, enthusiasm, risk taking, and inventiveness. What the customer wants is to be assured that he or she is an honored participant (rather than a pawn to be manipulated), a respected intellect deserving of support, and most of all a valued colleague. Such values must always be satisfied if leaders are to lead. But in times of change, where stress is high and security low, these values reign supreme—and woe be to the aspiring leader who denies them. The old-style salesman may have believed "let the buyer beware." Such a view no longer suffices in the world of commerce, and it will certainly not suffice in the changing world of education.

—Phillip C. Schlechty, *Schools for the Twenty-First Century*, p. 95

Managing change in complex organizations is like steering a sailboat in turbulent water and stormy winds. If you're on a course to some destination and the wind is blowing at gale force dead broadside, you have to make a number of critical choices. If you head into the wind, you'll lose speed and direction although you probably can ride out the storm. If you let the wind carry you too far, it might blow the boat over; and if you let it go a little less far than that, it may well drive you off course. If you decide to hold rigidly to your course at all costs, you may find that the winds rip the sails or even break off the mast.

The true sailor, knowing these choices, works *with* the wind. He or she will bring the boat up close between gusts, "fall off" a little on the next gust, and come back up to course in such a way that the boat stays on the compass heading towards its destination through many short-term decisions, which go with or against the prevailing winds in an appropriate combination.

—Richard Beckhard and Reuben T. Harris, *Organizational Transitions: Managing Complex Change* (2d ed.), p. 114

If you want to truly understand something, try to change it.

—Kurt Lewin

A paradigm, in a sense, tells you that there is a game, what the game is, and how to play it successfully. The idea of a game is a very appropriate metaphor for paradigms because it reflects the need for borders and directions on how to perform correctly. A paradigm tells you how to play the game according to the rules.

A paradigm shift, then, is a change to a new game, a new set of rules.

It is my belief that changes in paradigms are behind much of society's turbulence during the last thirty years. We had sets of rules we knew well, then someone changed the rules. We understood the old boundaries, then we had to learn new boundaries. And those changes dramatically upset our world.

In *Megatrends*, the best-seller of 1982, John Naisbitt reflects in an indirect way how important paradigm shifts are. Naisbitt suggested that there were ten important new trends that would generate profound changes in our society in the next fifteen to thirty years.

I believe that if you look for what initiated those trends, you will find a paradigm shift. What Naisbitt identifies for us in *Megatrends* is important, because he shows us a pathway of change that we can follow through time to measure how we are getting more of something or less of something.

But even more important than the pathway is our understanding of what instigated that change in the first place. We almost always find that at the beginning of the trend someone created a new set of rules. The trend toward decentralization is an excellent example of a paradigm shift. The old rules, the old game, required that we "centralize the organization and make the hierarchy complex." But that game ultimately created big problems. Then somebody discovered that there was a different way to deal with the problems, which was to decentralize the organization and simplify the structure; in other words, to change the rules. The result was a paradigm shift.

So if you want to improve your ability to anticipate the future, don't wait for the trends to develop. Instead, watch for people messing with the rules, because that is the earliest sign of significant change.

—Joel Arthur Barker, *Future Edge: Discovering the New Paradigms of Success*, pp. 37–38

No change will occur without leadership from somewhere.

—Edgar H. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, p. 322

The art of progress is to preserve order amid change and to preserve change amid order.
—Alfred North Whitehead

You manage within a paradigm.
You lead between paradigms.

That is the relation of paradigms to leadership. What allows you to “manage” within a paradigm? The rules, the guiding principles, the system, the standards, the protocols. Give a good manager the system and a manager will optimize it. That is a manager’s job. It is called paradigm enhancement.

Paradigm enhancement is taking the rules and making them better. It is working your way up the B Phase of the Paradigm Curve. We spend 90 percent of our lives doing just this, because it is a form of progress and is the natural route to improvement. We also call it evolution. Paradigm enhancement is what the Total Quality movement is all about. To be able to paradigm enhance is crucial to success and is the domain of the manager.

But you don’t manage between paradigms. Remember, leaving one paradigm while it is still successful and going to a new paradigm that is as yet unproven looks very risky. But leaders with their intuitive judgment assess the seeming risk, determine that shifting paradigms is the correct thing to do, and, because they are leaders, instill the courage in others to follow them.

This kind of change, paradigm shift change, occurs during less than 10 percent of our lives. Yet, it is as important as the paradigm enhancing that consumes the other 90 percent. I don’t say it is more important, but it is surely equal.

To be successful in the twenty-first century, you will need to be competent at both these kinds of changes for your organization to flourish. One without the other will not work.

—Joel Arthur Barker, *Future Edge: Discovering the New Paradigms of Success*, pp. 164–165

Educational change depends on what teachers do and think—it’s as simple and as complex as that.

—Michael G. Fullan with Suzanne Stiegelbauer,
The New Meaning of Educational Change, p. 117

There is a time for departure, even when there's no certain place to go.

—Tennessee Williams

Examining the record of past research from the vantage of contemporary historiography, the historians of science may be tempted to exclaim that when paradigms change, the world itself changes with them. Led by a new paradigm, scientists adopt new instruments and look in new places. Even more important, during revolutions scientists see new and different things when looking with familiar instruments in places they have looked before. It is as if the professional community had been suddenly transported to another planet where familiar objects are seen in a different light and are joined by unfamiliar ones as well. Of course, nothing of quite that sort does occur: there is no geographical transplantation; outside the laboratory everyday affairs usually continue as before. Nevertheless, paradigm changes do cause scientists to see the world of their research-engagement differently. In so far as their only recourse to that world is through what they see and do, we may want to say that after a revolution scientists are responding to a different world.

—Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (2d ed.), p. 111

By the time we reach adulthood, we are driven as much by habit as by anything else, and there is an infinity of habits in us. From the woman who twirls a strand of hair when she's nervous or bored to the man who expresses his insecurity by never saying "thank you," we are all victims of habits. They do not merely rule us, they inhibit us and make fools of us.

To free ourselves from habit, to resolve the paradoxes, to transcend conflicts, to become the masters rather than the slaves of our own lives, we must first see and remember, and then forget. That is why true learning begins with unlearning—and why unlearning is one of the recurring themes of our story.

Every great inventor or scientist has had to unlearn conventional wisdom in order to proceed with his work. For example, conventional wisdom said, "If God had meant man to fly, He would have given him wings." But the Wright brothers disagreed and built an airplane.

—Warren Bennis, *On Becoming a Leader*, p. 69

Changing things can be fun—and successful—sometimes! More often, change efforts fail because people really don't sign up to change. It's tough. People hang on to old habits and old behaviors long past their usefulness.

Remember the elephant training parable. Trainers shackle young elephants with heavy chains to deeply embedded stakes. In that way the elephant learns to stay in its place. Older elephants never try to leave even though they have the strength to pull the stake and move beyond. Their conditioning limits their movements with only a small metal bracelet around their foot—attached to nothing.

Like powerful elephants, many companies are bound by earlier conditioned constraints. "We've always done it this way" is as limiting to an organization's progress as the unattached chain around the elephant's foot.

Yet when the circus tent catches on fire—and the elephant sees the flames with its own eyes and smells the smoke with its own nostrils—it forgets its old conditioning and changes. Your task: set a fire so your people see the flames with their own eyes and smell the smoke with their own nostrils—without burning the tent down. And anyone can set the fire at any level in the organization.

—James A. Belasco, Ph.D., *Teaching the Elephant to Dance*, pp. 17–18

Mature people are apt to learn less than younger people because they are willing to risk less. Learning is a risky business, and we do not like failure. . . . By middle age most of us carry in our heads a tremendous catalogue of things we have no intention of trying again because we tried them once and failed. . . . We pay a heavy price for our fear of failure. It is a powerful obstacle to growth. It assures the progressive narrowing of the personality and prevents exploration and experimentation. There is no learning without some difficulty and fumbling. If you want to keep on learning, you must keep on risking failure—all your life. It's as simple as that.

—John Gardner, in David Campbell's *Take the Road to Creativity and Get Off Your Dead End*, p. 125

When we think about people in the change process we need to consider two dimensions. The first is their feelings about change, and the second is their knowledge and behavior as they become better able to use a particular innovation.

—Dennis Sparks, "What We Know About Change In Schools: An Interview with Susan Loucks-Horsley," *The Developer*, Sept. 1990, p. 1

Remember the cliché "I'll believe it when I see it!" From what I have said in this book, you should conclude that the reverse is more accurate: "I'll see it when I believe it." In other words, subtle vision is preceded by an understanding of the rules. To see well, we need paradigms.

Every teacher sees this happen. I know I did. When I was explaining a concept to my students, many were unable to understand it even though the information was directly in front of them. But, as they began to understand the principles, they would say, one by one, "Oh, now I get it." What they were getting was the paradigm; what they were gaining was a significant change in vision.

This third point about paradigms is especially important for people who are employers. It explains why some new employees have a difficult time of adjustment. What they are really doing is adjusting to the paradigms of the organization, and, until they know those rules, they will literally be unable to see things that are obvious to people who have been there for a while. The temptation is to think that these people are not intelligent enough to handle the job. The fact is, they may have more than enough intelligence; they simply lack the understanding of the particular paradigm.

—Joel Arthur Barker, *Future Edge: Discovering the New Paradigms of Success*, pp. 153–154

The research is based on the assumption that meaningful change is a process that takes time (years) rather than being a singular event or decision point (Hall and Rutherford 1976).

—Gene E. Hall and Shirley M. Hord, *Change in Schools: Facilitating the Process*, p. 23

Learning to lead is, on one level, learning to manage change. . . . A leader imposes (in the most positive sense of the word) his philosophy on the organization, creating or re-creating its culture. The organization then acts on that philosophy, carries out the mission, and the culture takes on a life of its own, becoming more cause than effect. But unless the leader continues to evolve, to adapt and adjust to external change, the organization will sooner or later stall.

In other words, one of a leader's principal gifts is his ability to use his experiences to grow in office. Teddy Roosevelt was described as a "clown" before he became president. His cousin, Franklin D. Roosevelt, was dismissed by Walter Lippman as "a pleasant country squire who wants to be president." The Roosevelts are now regarded as two of this country's best presidents. For leaders, the test and the proof are always in the doing.

—Warren Bennis, *On Becoming a Leader*, p. 14^r

Especially today, in the current volatile climate, it is vital that leaders steer a clear and consistent course. They must acknowledge uncertainties and deal effectively with the present, while simultaneously anticipating and responding to the future. This means endlessly expressing, explaining, extending, expanding, and when necessary revising the organization's mission. The goals are not ends, but ideal processes by which the future can be created.

—Warren Bennis, *On Becoming a Leader*, p. 163

Versatility prepares us for the ever changing world in which we live. If we approach that world with fixed ideas and positions, we will suffer, not prosper. But, if we embrace and participate in the changes, we will perform more creatively and powerfully than we ever imagined possible.

Without versatility we become set in our ways, isolated in our own world, unable to adapt to changes around us. And when we are finally forced to change, control already lies beyond our grasp.

With versatility we can learn to adapt to any situation, making adaptation a part of our daily lives. In the words of Marilyn Ferguson, author of *The Aquarian Conspiracy* "Believing in a world of fixity we will fight change; knowing a world of fluidity, we will cooperate with change."

Anticipating change and preparing yourself for adaptation through versatility solves only half the change equation. The other half involves actually implementing change in your organization. To successfully do so, you'll need to master the next skill, focus.

—Craig R. Hickman and Michael A. Silva, *Creating Excellence: Managing Corporate Culture, Strategy, and Change in the New Age*, p. 198

We live at a time in history when the basic institutions of society and the relationships between them are being reevaluated and redesigned.

—Richard Beckhard and Wendy Pritchard, *Changing the Essence: The Art of Creating and Leading Fundamental Change in Organizations*, p. 93

Change cannot be viewed as the enemy, for it is instead the source of organizational salvation. Only by changing themselves can organizations get back into the game and get to the heart of things.

—Warren Bennis, *On Becoming a Leader*, p. 174

Think of accelerated change as an object hurtling toward you at tremendous speed. If you first spot it a mile away, its speed and the distance between you and it blur its nature; all you can see is an indistinct shape. As the object continues rushing toward you, you begin to discern a rough oblong shape, but you can't determine much else about it. Is it a threatening enemy missile or a friendly vehicle you might ride toward the future? Quickly, it bears down on you. As you peer at it closely, you suddenly see handles on its side. An opportunity, not a danger! If you have focused well enough and soon enough, you can seize it, letting it whisk you forward well ahead of those who failed to focus on it in time.

—Craig R. Hickman and Michael A. Silva, *Creating Excellence: Managing Corporate Culture, Strategy, and Change in the New Age*, p. 199

One theme emerges from this discussion of the process of change. Though principals are important and their visions key in focusing attention on change and in successfully implementing the process of change, what counts in the end is bringing together the ideas and commitments of a variety of people who have a stake in the success of the school. As this process unfolds, principals can often find themselves on thin ice. They need to be clear about what it is that they want but cannot be so clear that they are providing people with road maps. They need to allow people to have an important say in shaping the direction of the school and deciding on the changes needed to get there, but they cannot be so detached that these individual aspirations remain more rhetorical than real.

—Thomas J. Sergiovanni, *The Principals' Perspective: A Reflective Practice Perspective*, 2d ed., p. 269

A leader needs a philosophy, a set of high standards by which the organization is measured, a set of values about how employees, colleagues, and customers ought to be treated, a set of principles that make the organization unique and distinctive.

Leaders also need plans. They need maps to help guide people. Yet complex plans overwhelm people; they stifle action. Instead, leaders lay down milestones and put up signposts. They unravel bureaucratic knots. They create opportunities for small wins, which add up to major victories.

Words and plans are not enough. Leaders stand up for their beliefs. They practice what they preach. They show others by their own example that they live by the values that they profess. Leaders know that while their position gives them authority, their behavior earns them respect. It is consistency between words and actions that builds a leader's credibility.

—James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *The Leadership Challenge: How to Get Extraordinary Things Done in Organizations*, p. 187

Substantial change programs do not run themselves. They need active orchestration and coordination.

—Karen Seashore Louis and Matthew B. Miles, *Improving the Urban High School: What Works and Why*, p. 263

Change is full of paradoxes. Being deeply committed to a particular change in itself provides no guidelines for attaining the change, and may blind us to the realities of others that would be necessary for transforming and implementing the change effectively. Having no vision at all is what makes for educational bandwagons. In the final analysis, either we have to give up and admit that effective educational change is impossible, or we have to take our best knowledge and attempt to improve our efforts. We possess much knowledge that could make improvement possible. Whether this knowledge gets used is itself a problem of change, part of the infinite regression that, once we have gained some knowledge of the process of change, leads us to ask how we get that knowledge—of the process of change—used or implemented.

—Michael G. Fullan with Suzanne Stiegelbauer, *The New Meaning of Educational Change*, p. 102

Probably the most important single process involved in effective change is the process of *learning while doing*. The complexity of change strategies demands that processes of feedback and replanning make up the essential core of change management. In a military campaign, it is a basic principle that intelligence gathering goes hand in hand with delivery. Learning to improve the effectiveness of the effort is a natural component of all strategies and tactics. Yet in many business organizations, executives have trouble applying this principle to the management of the organization. Historic practices, early training, "traditional" values about what are good and bad managerial practices, all combine to reward behavior that is "result oriented" rather than "learning oriented."

—Richard Beckhard and Wendy Pritchard,
*Changing the Essence: The Art of Creating and
Leading Fundamental Change in Organizations*

The ultimate test of practical leadership is the realization of intended, real change that meets people's enduring needs.

—James MacGregor Burns, *Leadership*

According to Marris, "Whether the change is sought or resisted, and happens by chance or design; whether we look at it from the standpoint of reformers or those they manipulate, of individuals or institutions, the response is characteristically ambivalent" (p. 7). New experiences are always initially reacted to in the context of some "familiar, reliable construction of reality" in which people must be able to attach personal meaning to the experiences regardless of how meaningful they might be to others. Marris does not see this "conservative impulse" as incompatible with growth: "It seeks to consolidate skills and attachments, whose secure possession provides the assurance to master something new" (p. 22).

—Michael G. Fullan with Suzanne Stiegelbauer, *The
New Meaning of Educational Change*, p. 31

Whether one is an entrepreneur, an intrapreneur, a manager, or an individual contributor, the leadership attitude is what makes the difference. That attitude is characterized by a posture of challenging the process of wanting to change the business-as-usual environment.

—James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *The Leadership Challenge: How to Get Extraordinary Things Done in Organizations*, p. 39

The newest ideas about planning try to strike a compromise among the previous models. The evolutionary perspective rests on the assumption that the environment both inside and outside organizations is often chaotic. No specific plan can last for very long, because it will become outmoded either due to changing external pressures, or because disagreement over priorities arises within the organization. Yet, there is no reason to assume that the best response is to plan passively, relying on incremental decisions. Instead, the organization can cycle back and forth between efforts to gain normative consensus about what it may become, to plan strategies for getting there, and to carry out decentralized, incremental experimentation that harnesses the creativity of all members to the change effort.

This approach is evolutionary in the sense that, although the mission and image of the organization's ideal future may be based on a top-level analysis of the environment and its demands, strategies for achieving the mission are frequently reviewed and refined based on internal scanning for opportunities and successes. Strategy is viewed as a flexible tool, rather than as a semi-permanent extension of the mission: If rational planning is like blueprinting, evolutionary planning is more like taking a journey. There is a general destination, but many twists and turns as unexpected events occur along the way.

—Karen Seashore Louis and Matthew B. Miles, *Improving the Urban High School: What Works and Why*, p. 193

Schön (1971) has developed essentially the same theme. All real change involves "passing through the zones of uncertainty . . . the situation of being at sea, of being lost, of confronting more information than you can handle" (p. 12).

—Michael G. Fullan with Suzanne Stiegelbauer, *The New Meaning of Educational Change*, pp. 31–32

Any change program represents not only an energy "add-on" to the way things are normally done, but a potential threat to existing routines. Change also heightens uncertainty considerably, so that normal responses to problems are not made, or don't seem to work.

—Karen Seashore Louis and Matthew B. Miles, *Improving the Urban High School: What Works and Why*, p. 268

An integral part of a fundamental change strategy must be a conscious decision to move to a learning mode, where both learning and doing are equally valued. This is an essential precondition for managing fundamental change effectively and is also a fundamental change in its own right. A further essential ingredient is a clear commitment by top leaders to making a significant personal investment in developing and building commitment to an inspirational vision, and to examining and using their own time and behavior in ways that are congruent with this vision.

—Richard Beckhard and Wendy Pritchard, *Changing the Essence: The Art of Creating and Leading Fundamental Change in Organizations*

As House (1974) explains,

The personal costs of trying new innovations are often high . . . and seldom is there any indication that innovations are worth the investment. Innovations are acts of faith. They require that one believe that they will ultimately bear fruit and be worth the personal investment, often without the hope of an immediate return. Costs are also high. The amount of energy and time required to learn the new skills or roles associated with the new innovation is a useful index to the magnitude of resistance. (p. 73)

—Michael G. Fullan with Suzanne Stiegelbauer, *The New Meaning of Educational Change*, p. 34

It is so easy to underestimate the complexities of the change process. There is in fact a lot of common sense in successful change processes. Looked at one day, in one setting, successful change seems so sensible and straightforward. But on another day, in another situation, or even the same situation on another day, improvement cannot be obtained with the most sophisticated efforts. Change is difficult because it is riddled with dilemmas, ambivalences, and paradoxes. It combines steps that seemingly do not go together: to have a clear vision and be open-minded; to take initiative and empower others; to provide support and pressure; to start small and think big; to expect results and be patient and persistent; to have a plan and be flexible; to use top-down and bottom-up strategies; to experience uncertainty and satisfaction. Educational change is above all a very personal experience in a social, but often impersonal, setting.

—Michael G. Fullan with Suzanne Stiegelbauer, *The New Meaning of Educational Change*, p. 350

Because changing directions makes most people nervous, planning for the future is sometimes scary. A personal philosophy of life that favors change is useful here, and the best future planning is typically done by people who are innovative, willing to experiment and, if necessary, to pay the price of some inevitable failures. Aspiring leaders who wish to control their own futures need to develop these risk-taking propensities; otherwise a stagnant status quo may reign and moss will grow.

—David Campbell, *If I'm In Charge Here Why Is Everybody Laughing?*, p. 57

What change leaders in education need to understand is that most teachers and most administrators *want* to think. The problem is that schools, as they are presently organized, breed mindlessness. . . . For many teachers, the opportunity to read, to think, to argue and converse about important issues, and the opportunity to lead others in such exercises, are in themselves incentives for a positive inclination toward a change effort. Many teachers crave to lead, though they do not want to be administrators. Many teachers want, as many other people want, to be in a position to make their opinions known and their beliefs felt. If the dynamics surrounding a change process can respond to this need, considerable support for the change can be engendered. If this need is overlooked or suppressed, however, support will be less enthusiastic and resistance more likely—or so I have found.

—Philip C. Schlechty, *Schools for the Twenty-First Century*, p. 80



Notes

Characteristics of change described or implied in the three statements I read

1. Statement made by

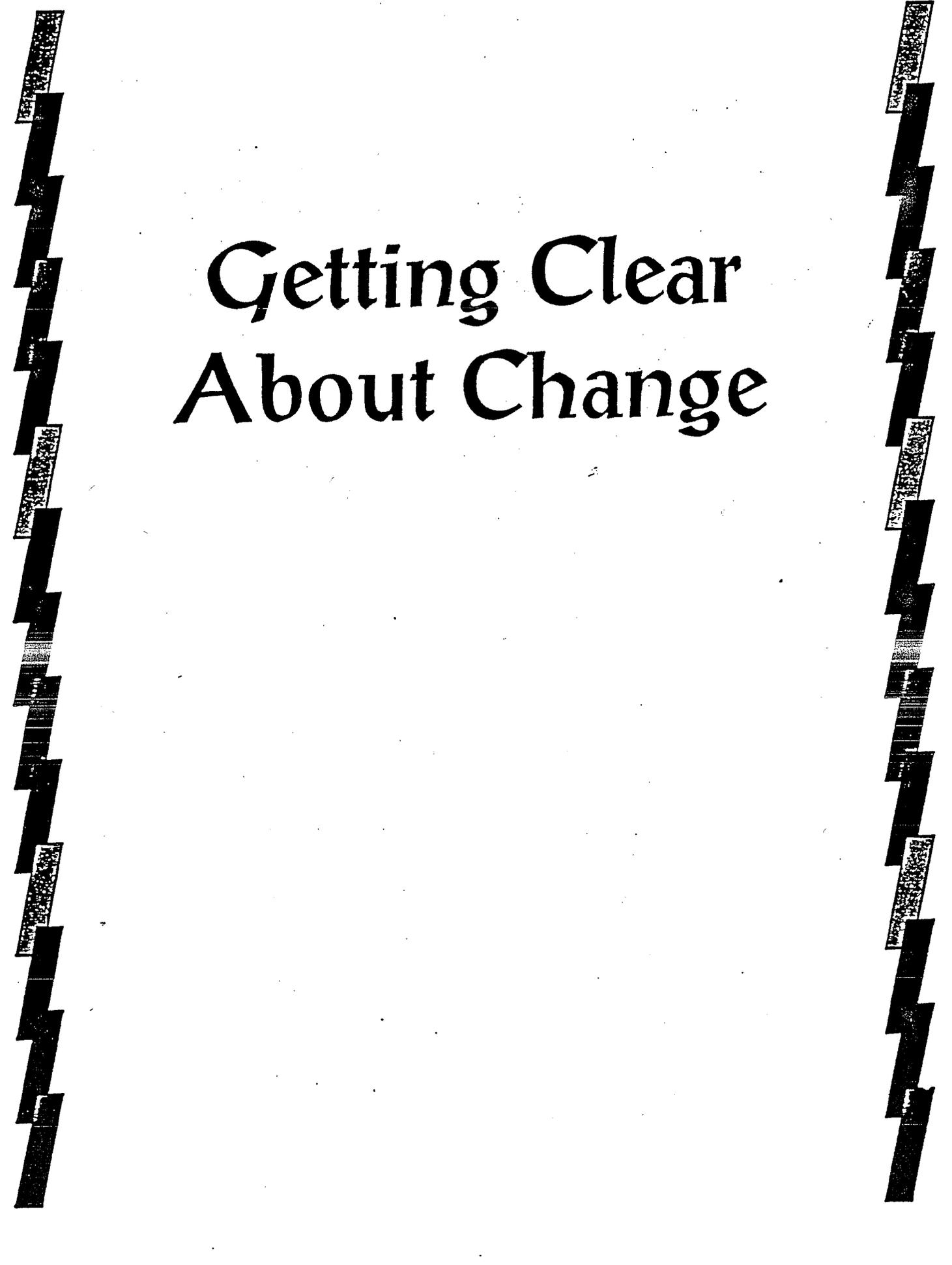
Characteristics of change:

2. Statement made by

Characteristics of change:

3. Statement made by

Characteristics of change:



Getting Clear About Change



To Change or Not to Change

- ∞ What values are involved?
- ∞ Who will benefit?
- ∞ How much of a priority is it?
- ∞ How achievable is it?
- ∞ What areas of potential change are being neglected?

THE PROBLEM OF MEANING

"One of the most fundamental problems in education today is that people do not have a clear, coherent sense of meaning about what educational change is for, what it is, and how it proceeds. Thus, there is much faddism, superficiality, confusion, failure of change programs, unwarranted and misdirected resistance, and misunderstood reform. What we need is a more coherent picture that people who are involved in or affected by educational change can use to make sense of what they and others are doing.

The problem of meaning is central to making sense of educational change. In order to achieve greater meaning, we must come to understand both the small and the big pictures. The small picture concerns the subjective meaning or lack of meaning for individuals at all levels of the educational system.

Neglect of the phenomenology of change----that is, how people actually experience change as distinct from how it might have been intended----is at the heart of the spectacular lack of success of most social reforms. It is also necessary to build and understand the big picture because educational change, after all, is a sociopolitical process.

It is important that people make sense of their individual situations and understand the broader social forces influencing change.....so that they and others around them can take some action to improve their immediate situation "

Michael Fullan, 1991
The New Meaning of Educational Change

Reflections

After reading this excerpt, what thoughts come to mind, regarding the context in which you work and changes therein?

EXAMINING INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE SITUATIONS

Consider.....

- The *what* of change
- The *how* of change

"Meaning must be accomplished in relation to both these aspects. It is possible to be crystal clear about what one wants and be totally inept at achieving it. Or to be skilled at managing change but empty headed about what changes are most needed. To make matters more difficult, we often do not know what we want, or do not know the actual consequences of a particular direction until we try to get there. Thus, on the one hand, we need to keep in mind the values and goals and the consequences associated with specific educational changes; and, on the other hand, we need to comprehend the dynamics of educational change as a sociopolitical process involving all kinds of individual, classroom, school, local, regional and national factors at work in interactive ways. The problem of meaning is one of how those involved in change can come to understand what it is that should change and how it can be best accomplished, while realizing that the what and how constantly interact and reshape each other.

We are not only dealing with a moving and changing target; we are also playing this out in social settings. Solutions must come through the development of shared meaning. The interface between individual and collective meaning and action in everyday situations is where change stands or falls."

Michael Fullan, 1991
The New Meaning of Educational Change

Thinking about your own context.....

1) What is the what and how of change?

2) What are some of the sociopolitical dynamics affecting the change?

3) How might shared meaning be developed?

"THE PROOF IS IN THE PUTTING"

"How change is put into practice determines to a large extent how well it fares."

Michael Fullan, 1991

To Think About.....

How was the change you're thinking about put into practice?

What factors need to be addressed?

How might they be addressed?

LOOKING AT IMPACT

What are some implications of the change effort with which you're involved.....

for teachers?

for principals?

for students?

for parents?

for community members?

The Change Process
Key Thematic Findings
(Matthew Miles/Karen Louis 1990)

1. It seems crucial to develop a clear shared vision
 - a) of the school as it might become; and
 - b) of the nature of the change process that will get us there.
2. Successful change is most likely when the program is evolutionary rather than tightly pre-designed, with plenty of early action to create energy and support learning.
3. Turbulence is the norm, and that school implementation efforts are most successful when the school and the district are actively engaged with each other, but with few rules and much autonomy for the school.
4. Substantial, sustained, relevant, and varied assistance is essential; implementation is not a self-sustained process; building permanent internal resource structures is critical.
5. Serious change efforts are rife with problems; coping with them actively, promptly, and with depth is the single biggest determinant of success; careful problem sensing and deliberate coping efforts are the hallmark of success.

(From five in-depth studies of urban high schools in five major cities and a survey of 178 big-city high school principals whose schools were carrying out serious improvement efforts for one to four years.)

Assumptions About Change

THERE IS SOMETHING I DON'T KNOW
THAT I AM SUPPOSED TO KNOW.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT IS I DON'T KNOW,
AND YET AM SUPPOSED TO KNOW,
AND I FEEL I LOOK STUPID
IF I SEEM BOTH NOT TO KNOW IT
AND NOT KNOW WHAT IT IS I DON'T KNOW.
THEREFORE, I PRETEND I KNOW IT.
THIS IS NERVE-WRACKING SINCE I DON'T
KNOW WHAT I MUST PRETEND TO KNOW.
THEREFORE, I PRETEND I KNOW EVERYTHING.

R.D. LAING, "KNOTS" (1970)

The following is taken from:

The Meaning of Educational Change, by Michael Fullan,

The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education

Teachers College Press, Columbia University, NY 1982.

1. Do not assume that your version of what the change should be is the one that should or could be implemented. (On the contrary, assume that one of the main purposes of implementation is to exchange your reality of what should be through interaction with implementation consisting of some transformation or continual development of initial ideas.)
2. Assume that any significant innovation, if it is to result in change, requires individual implementors to work out their own meaning. Significant change involves a certain amount of ambiguity, ambivalence, and uncertainty for the individual about the meaning of the change. Thus, effective implementation is a process of clarification.
3. Assume that conflict and disagreement are not only inevitable but fundamental to successful change. Since any group of people possess multiple realities, any collective change attempt will necessarily involve conflict.

4. Assume that people need pressure to change (even in directions which they desire), but it will only be effective under conditions which allow them to react, to form their own position, to interact with other implementors, to obtain technical assistance, etc. Unless people are going to be replaced with others who have different desired characteristics, resocialization is at the heart of change.
5. Assume that effective change takes time. It is a process of "development in use." Unrealistic or undefined timelines fail to recognize that implementation occurs developmentally. Expect significant change to take a minimum of two or three years.
6. Do not assume that the reason for lack of implementation is outright rejection of the values embodied in the change, or hard-core resistance to all change. Assume that there are a number of possible reasons: value rejection, inadequate resources to support implementation, insufficient time elapsed.
7. Do not expect all or even most people or groups to change. The complexity of change is such that it is totally impossible to bring about widespread reform in any large social system. Progress occurs when we take steps (e.g., by following assumptions listed here) which increase the number of people affected. Our reach should exceed our grasp, but not by such a margin that we fall flat on our face. Instead of being discouraged by all that remains to be done, be encouraged by what has been accomplished by way of improvement resulting from your actions.
8. Assume that you will need a *plan* which is based on the above assumptions and ~~which addresses the factors known to affect change~~ change process is essential. Careful planning can bring about significant change on a fairly wide scale over a period of two or three years.
9. Assume that no amount of knowledge will ever make it totally clear what action should be taken. Action decisions are a combination of valid knowledge, political considerations, on-the-spot decisions, and intuition. Better knowledge of the change process will improve the mix of resources on which to draw, but it will never and should never represent the sole basis for decisions.
10. Assume that change is a frustrating, discouraging business. If all or some of the above assumptions cannot be made (a distinct possibility in some situations for some changes), do not expect significant change as far as implementation is concerned.

Michael Fullan is quoted by permission of his publisher.

R.D. Laing's "Knots" is quoted by permission of his publisher.

ASCD: Implementing Instructional Innovations. January 30 - February 1, 1990. Sarasota, Florida.

Success Factors of Change Projects

(Huberman and Miles, 1986)

Initiation

- Linked to high profile need
- Clear model of implementation
- One or more strong advocates
- Active initiation

Implementation

- Coordination
- Shared control
- Pressure and support
- Ongoing technical assistance
- Early rewards for teachers

Institutionalization

- Embedding
- Links to instruction
- Widespread use
- Removal of competing priorities
- Continuing assistance

R - F I T

Relevance

Feasibility

Involvement

Trust

4 Change Filters

Cost

Complexity

Centrality

Coverage

TRUST ACTIVITY

One of the most important components or preconditions for the peer coaching relationship is TRUST.

I. List the behaviors and qualities that you feel promote and maintain a trusting relationship.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

II. Take a few minutes to think about these items. You will probably become aware that some of the items on the list mean more to you than others. Rank the 3 behaviors or qualities that are most important to you and explain your ranking.

Behavior or Quality	Why You Ranked It This Way
1.	
2.	
3.	

Discuss your rankings with your partner or your team.

III. Inventory

Consider each of the behaviors or qualities listed in I. Give yourself a score, based on the following rating scale, that best describes your professional behavior with most people, most of the time, at this time in your life.

TRUST ACTIVITY

One of the most important components or preconditions for the peer coaching relationship is TRUST.

- I. List the behaviors and qualities that you feel promote and maintain a trusting relationship.
 1. Sharing (of personal events, family matters, feelings)
 2. Vulnerability (to err is human - extent to which leader perceived to be vulnerable)
 3. Loyalty (commitment to consistent goals of organization and its leaders)
 4. Accepting others (the unique behavior of others)
 5. Involving others (using them for input or decision making)
 6. Valuing (willingness to exchange ideas and ideals with others)
 7. Awareness (sensitivity to the needs of others)
 8. Communicating (giving clear written and oral communications)
 9. Openness (willingness to explore new experiences)
 10. Honesty (avoidance of deceit)

- II. Take a few minutes to think about these items. You will probably become aware that some of the items on the list mean more to you than others. Rank the 3 behaviors or qualities that are most important to you and explain your ranking.

Behavior or Quality

Why You Ranked It This Way

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Consider each of the behaviors or qualities listed in I. Give yourself a score, based on the following rating scale, that best describes your professional behavior with most people, most of the time, at this time in your life.

Points

Meaning

- 5 The behavior is exhibited most of the time. (consistently)
- 4 The behavior is exhibited much of the time. (frequently)
- 3 The behavior is sometimes exhibited, sometimes not. (inconsistent)
- 2 The behavior is exhibited sometimes. (infrequently)
- 1 The behavior is exhibited very little. (seldom)

IV. Choose 2 or 3 of the trust behaviors or qualities which you wish to improve. What specifically will you do? Discuss with your partner or team. How will you work on building and/or maintaining your trust relationship as you move into peer coaching?

Behavior

Plan for Improving

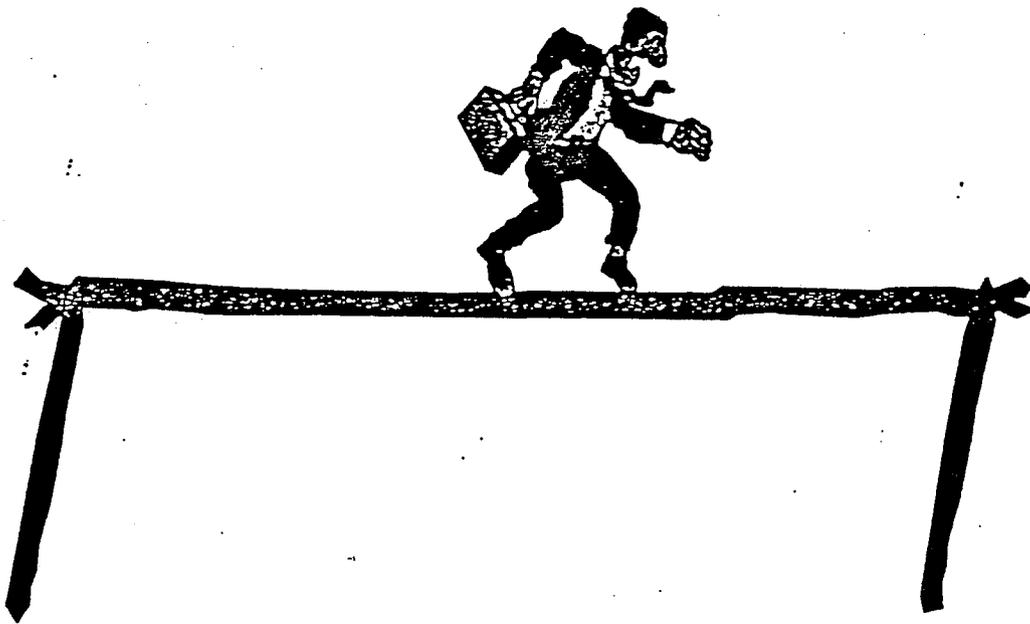
1.

2.

3.

Concerns are not fixed!

They change as people move
through various phases.



Why Change Fails

1. We follow faulty maps of change.
2. We have complex problems and no easy solutions.
3. We favor symbols over substance.
4. We are impatient and often settle for superficial solutions.
5. We misunderstand resistance, seeing it as an obstacle
rather than what it really is, a source of information.
6. We don't build connections among pockets of success in order to sustain them, and thus often let them die off.
7. We misuse knowledge about the change process.

**Change = Things often get worse instead
of better.**

Why?

We are overloaded with problems—and with solutions that don't work.

We get glimpses of the power of change, but we have little confidence that we know how to continue the momentum of improvement.

We are overwhelmed with fragmented, uncoordinated, and ephemeral attempts at change.

#1 Faulty Maps of Change

It's hard to get to a destination when your map doesn't accurately represent the territory you're to traverse. Everyone involved in school reform—teachers, administrators, parents, students, district staff members, consultants, board members, state department officials, legislators, materials developers, publishers, test-makers, teacher educators, researchers—has a personal map of how change proceeds. These constructs are often expressed in the form of a proposition or statement.

1. Resistance is inevitable, because people resist change.
2. Every school is unique.
3. *Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.*
4. Schools are essentially conservative institutions, harder to change than other organizations.
5. You just have to live reform one day at a time.
6. You need a mission, objectives, and a series of tasks laid out well in advance.
7. You can never please everyone, so just push ahead with reforms.
8. Full participation of everyone involved in a change is essential.
9. Keep it simple, stupid: go for small, easy changes rather than big, demanding ones.
10. Mandate change, because people won't do it otherwise.

People act on their maps. But maps such as these don't provide reliable or valid guidance. Some, like number 1, are simply self-sealing and tautological. Others, like number 2, are true in the abstract but totally unhelpful in providing guidance. . . .

Some, like number 3, have the seductive appearance of truth, though they are mostly false. It stretches the bounds of credulity to say that the schools we see today are no different from those of yesteryear or that all change efforts are self-defeating. Such maps are self-defeating. At their worst, they tell us that nothing really changes—and that nothing will work. On such self-exculpatory propositions as number 4, there's simply very little evidence, and what there is leads to the verdict of "not proven."

Sometimes our maps are in conflict with themselves or with the maps of colleagues. For example, number 5 advocates the virtues of improvisation, while number 6 lauds rational planning. In fact, the literature on organizational change and a recent study of major change in urban high schools show that *neither* statement is valid as a guide to successful school reform. The same appears to be true for propositions 7 and 8.

. . . Though number 9 looks obvious, studies of change have repeatedly found that substantial change efforts that address multiple problems are more likely to succeed and survive than small-scale, easily trivialized innovations.

And number 10, as attractive as it may be politically, simply doesn't work. Indeed, it often makes matters worse. You can't mandate important changes, because they require skill, motivation, commitment, and discretionary judgment on the part of those who must change.

—Reprinted with permission from Michael G. Fullan and Matthew B. Miles, "Getting Reform Right: What Works and What Doesn't," *Phi Delta Kappan* (June 1992), pp. 745–746.

#2 Complex Problems

Another major reason for the failure of reform is that the solutions are not easy—or even known in many cases. A number of years ago Arthur Wise labeled this problem the “hyperrationalization” of reform:

To create goals for education is to will that something occur. But goals, in the absence of a theory of how to achieve them, are mere wishful thinking. If there is no reason to believe a goal is attainable—perhaps evidenced by the fact that it has never been attained—then a rational planning model may not result in goal attainment.

The reform agenda has broadened in fundamental ways in the last five years. One need only mention the comprehensive reform legislation adopted in virtually every state and the scores of restructuring efforts in order to realize that current change efforts are enormously complex—both in the substance of their goals and in the capacity of individuals and institutions to carry out and coordinate reforms.

Education is a complex system, and its reform is even more complex. Even if one considers only seemingly simple, first-order changes, the number of components and their interrelationships are staggering: curriculum and instruction, school organization, student services, community involvement, teacher inservice training, assessment, reporting, and evaluation. Deeper, second-order changes in school cultures, teacher/student relationships, and values and expectations of the system are all the more daunting.

Furthermore, higher-order educational goals for all students require knowledge and abilities that we have never demonstrated. In many cases, we simply don't know how to proceed: solutions have yet to be developed. This is no reason to stop trying, but we must remember that it is folly to act as if we know how to solve complex problems in short order. We must have an approach to reform that acknowledges that we don't necessarily know all the answers, that is conducive to developing solutions as we go along, and that sustains our commitment and persistence to stay with the problem until we get somewhere. In other words, we need a different map for solving complex rather than simple problems.

—Reprinted with permission from Michael G. Fullan and Matthew B. Miles, “Getting Reform Right: What Works and What Doesn't,” *Phi Delta Kappan* (June 1992), p. 746.

#3 Symbols Over Substance

In the RAND-sponsored study of federal programs supporting educational change, Paul Berman and Milbrey McLaughlin found that some school districts adopted external innovations for opportunistic reasons rather than to solve a particular problem. These apparent reforms brought extra resources (which were not necessarily used for the intended purpose), symbolized that action was being taken (whether or not follow-up occurred), and furthered the careers of the innovators (whether or not the innovation succeeded). Thus the mere appearance of innovation is sometimes sufficient for achieving political success.

Education reform is as much a political as an educational process, and it has both negative and positive aspects. One need not question the motives of political decision makers to appreciate the negative. Political time lines are at variance with the time lines for education reform. This difference often results in vague goals, unrealistic schedules, a preoccupation with symbols of reform (new legislation, task forces, commissions, and the like), and shifting priorities as political pressures ebb and flow.

We acknowledge that symbols are essential for success. They serve to crystallize images and to attract and generate political power and financial resources. Symbols can also provide personal and collective meaning and give people faith and confidence when they are dealing with unclear goals and complex situations. They are essential for galvanizing visions, acquiring resources, and carrying out concerted action. When symbols and substance are congruent, they form a powerful combination.

Nonetheless, reform often fails because politics favors symbols over substance. Substantial change in practice requires a lot of hard and clever work "on the ground," which is not the strong point of political players. After several experiences with the dominance of symbolic change over substantive change, people become cynical and take the next change that comes along much less seriously.

Symbolic change does not have to be without substance, however. Indeed, the best examples of effective symbols are grounded in rituals, ceremonies, and other events in the daily life of an organization. While we cannot have effective reform without symbols, we can easily have symbols without effective reform—the predominant experience of most educators and one that predisposes them to be skeptical about *all* reforms.

—Reprinted with permission from Michael G. Fullan and Matthew B. Miles, "Getting Reform Right: What Works and What Doesn't," *Phi Delta Kappan* (June 1992), pp. 746–747.

#4 Impatient and Superficial Solutions

Reforms also fail because our attempts to solve problems are frequently superficial. Superficial solutions, introduced quickly in an atmosphere of crisis, normally make matters worse. This problem is all the more serious now that we are tackling large-scale reforms, for the consequences of failure are much more serious.

Reforms in structure are especially susceptible to superficiality and unrealistic time lines, because they can be launched through political or administrative mandates. Two examples at opposite ends of the political spectrum provide cases in point. A recent study of the impact of statewide testing in two states found that, while new testing mandates caused action at the local level, they also narrowed the curriculum and created adverse conditions for reform:

[C]oping with the pressure to attain satisfactory results in high-stakes tests caused educators to develop almost a "crisis mentality" in their approach, in that they jumped quickly into "solutions" to address a specific issue. They narrowed the range of instructional strategies from which they selected means to instruct their students; they narrowed the content of the material they chose to present to students; and they narrowed the range of course offerings available to students.

Site-based management—opposite in many ways to the strategy of centralized testing—also shows problems associated with structural reforms. Daniel Levine and Eugene Eubanks, among others, have indicated how school-based models often result in changes in formal decision-making structures but rarely result in a focus on developing instructional skills or on changing the culture of schools. There are numerous other examples of new legislation and policies—career ladders, mentoring and induction policies, testing and competency requirements, and so on—being rushed into place with little forethought about possible negative consequences and side effects.

A related bane of reform is faddism. Schools, districts, and states are under tremendous pressure to reform. Innovation and reform are big business, politically and economically. The temptation is great to latch on to the quick fix, to go along with the trend, to react uncritically to endorsed innovations as they come and go. Local educators experience most school reforms as fads.

There are two underlying problems. One is that mistaken or superficial solutions are introduced; the other is that, even when the solution is on the right track, hasty implementation leads to failure. Structural solutions are relatively easy to initiate under the right political conditions, but they are no substitute for the hard work, skill, and commitment needed to blend different structural changes into a successful reform effort. In other words, changes in structure must go hand in hand with changes in culture and in the individual and collective capacity to work through new structures. Because education reform is so complex, we cannot know in advance exactly which new structures and behavioral patterns should go together or how they should mesh. But we do know that neglecting one or the other is a surefire recipe for failure.

—Reprinted with permission from Michael G. Fullan and Matthew B. Miles, "Getting Reform Right: What Works and What Doesn't," *Phi Delta Kappan* (June 1992), pp. 747-748.

#5 Misunderstanding Resistance

Things hardly ever go easily during change efforts. Since change necessarily involves people, and people can commit willed actions, it seems natural to attribute progress that is slower than we might wish to their "resistance." Before a recent workshop, one of us asked a group of principals to list the problems they faced in a specific change project. More than half said "resistance"—variously known as intransigence, entrenchment, fearfulness, reluctance to buy in, complacency, unwillingness to alter behaviors, and failure to recognize the need for change. These traits were attributed to teachers and other staff members, though not to the principals themselves.

But it is usually unproductive to label an attitude or action "resistance." It diverts attention from real problems of implementation, such as diffuse objectives, lack of technical skill, or insufficient resources for change. In effect, the label also individualizes issues of change and converts everything into a matter of "attitude." Because such labeling places the blame (and the responsibility for the solution) on others, it immobilizes people and leads to "if only" thinking.

Change does involve individual attitudes and behaviors, but they need to be framed as natural responses to transition, not misunderstood as "resistance." During transitions from a familiar to a new state of affairs, individuals must normally confront the loss of the old and commit themselves to the new, unlearn old beliefs and behaviors and learn new ones, and move from anxiousness and uncertainty to stabilization and coherence. Any significant change involves a period of intense personal and organizational learning and problem solving. People need support for such work, not displays of impatience.

Blaming "resistance" for the slow pace of reform also keeps us from understanding that individuals and groups faced with something new need to assess the change for its genuine possibilities and for how it bears on their self-interest. From computers across the curriculum, to mainstreaming, to portfolio assessments, to a radical change in the time schedule, significant changes normally require extra effort during the transitional stage. Moreover, there's little certainty about the kinds of outcomes that may ensue for students and teachers (and less assurance that they will be any better than the status quo). These are legitimate issues that deserve careful attention.

Many reform initiatives are ill-conceived, and many others are fads. The most authentic response to such efforts is resistance. Nevertheless, when resistance is misunderstood, we are immediately set on a self-defeating path. Reframing the legitimate basis of most forms of resistance will allow us to get a more productive start and to isolate the real problems of improvement.

—Reprinted with permission from Michael G. Fullan and Matthew B. Miles, "Getting Reform Right: What Works and What Doesn't," *Phi Delta Kappan* (June 1992), p. 748.

#6 Attrition of Pockets of Success

There are many examples of successful reforms in individual schools—cases in which the strong efforts of teachers, principals, and district administrators have brought about significant changes in classroom and school practice. We do not have much evidence about the durability of such successes, but we have reason to believe that they may not survive if the conditions under which they developed are changed.

Successful reforms have typically required enormous effort on the part of one or more individuals—effort that may not be sustainable over time. For example, staff collaboration takes much energy time to develop, yet it can disappear overnight when a few key people leave. What happens outside the school—such as changes in district policies on the selection and transfer of teachers and principals—can easily undo gains that have been made.

Local innovators, even when they are successful in the short run, may burn themselves out or unwittingly seal themselves off from the surrounding environment. Thus schools can become hotbeds of innovation and reform in the absence of external support, but they cannot *stay* innovative without the continuing support of the district and other agencies. Innovative schools may enjoy external support from a critically important sponsor (e.g., the district superintendent) or from a given agency only to see that support disappear when the sponsor moves on or the agency changes policies. Of course, the failure to institutionalize an innovation and build it into the normal structures and practices of the organization underlies the disappearance of many reforms.

We suspect that few things are more discouraging than working hard against long odds over a period of time to achieve a modicum of success—only to see it evaporate in short order as unrelated events take their toll. It is not enough to achieve isolated pockets of success. Reform fails unless we can demonstrate that pockets of success add up to new structures, procedures, and school cultures that press for continuous improvement. So far there is little such evidence.

—Reprinted with permission from Michael G. Fullan and Matthew B. Miles, "Getting Reform Right: What Works and What Doesn't," *Phi Delta Kappan* (June 1992), p. 748.

#7 Misuse of Knowledge About the Change Process

The final problem is related to a particular version of faulty maps: "knowledge" of the change process is often cited as the authority for taking certain actions. Statements such as "Ownership is the key to reform," "Lots of inservice training is required," "The school is the unit of change," "Vision and leadership are critical," and so on are all half-truths. Taken literally, they can be misused.

Reform is systemic, and actions based on knowledge of the change process must be systemic, too. To succeed we need to link a number of key aspects of knowledge and maintain the connections before and during the process of change. In the following section we offer seven such themes, which we believe warrant being called propositions for success.

... After years of failed education reform, educators are more and more in the habit of saying that "knowledge of the change process" is crucial. But few people really know what that means. The phrase is used superficially, glibly, as if saying it over and over will lead to understanding and appropriate action.

We do believe that knowing about the change process is crucial. But there are as many myths as there are truths associated with change, and it is time to deepen the way we think about change. We need to assess our ~~knowledge more critically and describe what we know. One needs a good deal of sophistication to grasp the~~ fundamentals of the change process and to use that knowledge wisely.

We also believe that serious education reform will never be achieved until there is a significant increase in the number of people—leaders and other participants alike—who have come to internalize and habitually act on basic knowledge of how successful change takes place. Reformers talk of the need for deeper, second-order changes in the structures and cultures of schools, rather than superficial first-order changes. But no change would be more fundamental than a dramatic expansion of the capacity of individuals and organizations to understand and deal with change. This generic capacity is worth more than a hundred individual success stories of implementing specific innovations. As we shall see, even individual success stories don't last long without an appreciation of how to keep changes alive.

Rather than develop a new strategy for each new wave of reform, we must use basic knowledge about the do's and don'ts of bringing about *continuous improvement*.

—Reprinted with permission from Michael G. Fullan and Matthew B. Miles, "Getting Reform Right: What Works and What Doesn't," *Phi Delta Kappan* (June 1992), pp. 748–749, 745.

clearer picture of what the school values. Schools can get side-tracked toward nonproductive programs, a focus on control, and uncoordinated decisions - particularly when those schools serve large proportions of at-risk students. A clear vision and a common mission that identify the kind of learning to be achieved can help keep the school and the efforts of its staff and students on target.



slide

GOALS: School leaders should develop a clear, educationally focused vision and a well-defined mission statement, collaborating with school staff and community members to agree on the type of learning, beliefs, and goals that are important. A vision means an image of what the school can and should become. It is deeply embedded in values, hopes, and dreams. A mission statement is more specific and often defines what the school is trying to accomplish and for whom. It can be developed from the vision itself. Goals and objectives are still more specific and concrete, are derived from the vision, and can be used to focus change and improvement efforts.

Leaders should help develop a mission that is centered on student learning. The school mission should concentrate on key areas of high-quality student learning. But it also can concentrate on establishing a professional work environment that supports collegiality, improvement and professional growth, and an understanding of the importance of diversity and equity.

Collective visions often grow out of collaboration, teamwork, and empowerment. Many schools broaden this goal by establishing collaboratives and partnerships with outside agencies that serve students and their families.

The school's vision also can incorporate values and goals related to equity and justice, respect and appreciation for multiculturalism and diversity, and concern for the academic success of all students. These views of the school determine how people spend their time, what problems they solve, and how resources are distributed. Moreover, a clear understanding of the school's vision and mission statement may lead to greater parent and community support. Thus, having a clearly defined and communicated vision supports active improvement and accomplishment.



slide

ACTION OPTIONS: Establish teams, featuring members of all major groups in the school, to work on a shared vision for the school. The process of developing and implementing a vision should include the following actions:

- Study the importance of vision and planning in the success of organizations.
- Contact organizations that help schools develop a vision through staff development, conferences, and workshops.
- Learn about the components of a vision by observing leaders as they develop vision and mission statements with staff.
- Review examples of mission statements from other schools to find out how they communicate the school's ideas, values, and dreams, and how they target student learning. Then, work together to write a mission statement or statement of beliefs that can be displayed prominently in every classroom.
- Listen to leaders talk about their vision - e.g., through videotapes on organizational leadership.
- Observe how another organization's team responds to a shared vision - e.g., what the team sets