

# DOUGLAS B. REEVES, ENVISION A BETTER FUTURE

## 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*

**W**hen 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>