

When Teachers Resist Change

In 1996, international change agents declared that most school reforms fail, and resistance is a major factor in why they do. Therefore it is essential to discover why teachers resist change and find ways to overcome this resistance.

First step is to determine who is resisting the change and why.

- Failure to recognize the need for change.*
- Past experiences that were unsuccessful
- Fear of the unknown
- Disruption of well-established patterns/habits
- Lack of knowledge or skills to implement the change
- Threat to expertise and proven ability
- Threats to power or power relationships
- Threat to social relationships
- Threat to changes in resource allocations
- Outmoded mental models

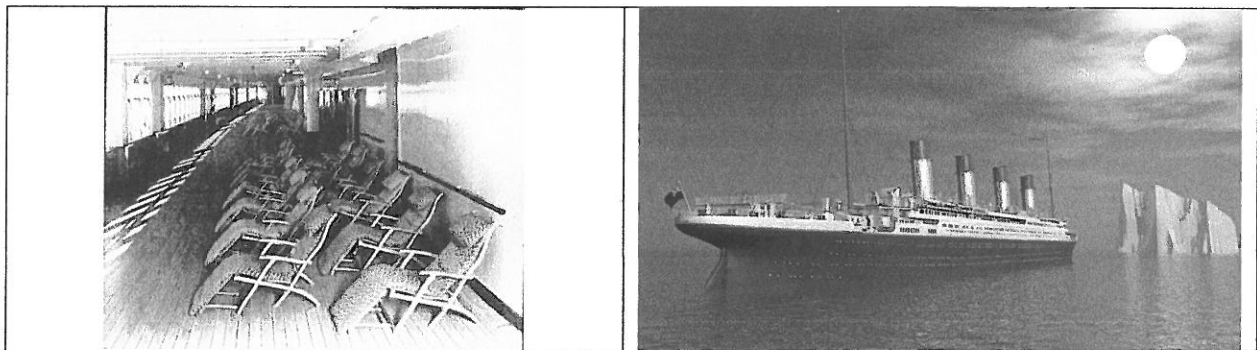
* this is a form of denial – the first stage of grieving for a loss

Change proponents need to:

- model risk taking & a willingness to change themselves,
- earn teacher's trust, *
- develop a supportive culture,
- involve teachers in decision making,
- enhance teachers self-efficacy,
- promote professional learning,
- win support of other influential teachers
- Understand the impact of first and second order change†

* best way to build trust is to take responsibility for problems and share credit for successes. This is a hallmark of a supportive environment.

† the Titanic – deckchairs or icebergs



1st Order Change

2nd Order Change

To reduce teacher resistance - leaders need to share leadership, and this begins with sharing decision making.

Sharing decision making promotes teacher self-efficacy.

Increasing teacher self-efficacy leads to improved student achievement because it reframes obstacles as challenges to be overcome rather than threats to be avoided. One key obstacle is implementation dip – a reality that occurs when 2nd order change is undertaken.

Leaders promote change by:

- Creating a sense of need,
- Helping others teachers to develop and operationalizing a vision,
- Rewarding constructive behaviours,
- Aiming for and celebrating short-term successes,
- Providing time and funding for professional learning,
- Removing policies or procedures that are obstacles.

This kind of leadership comes from creating a professional learning community that embraces learning rather than teaching, collaborating to help all pupils and adults learn, and using data to foster continuous improvements with a focus on results.