PART I

The Dynamics of Change

"Tell me, Mr. Mott: have you tried any experiments with any of our new educational systems? The modern kindergarten methods or the Gary system?" "Oh. Those. Most of these would-be reformers are simply notoriety-seekers. . . . what these faddists advocate—heaven knows what they do want—knitting, I suppose, and classes in wiggling the ears!"

—Sinclair Lewis, *Main Street* (1920)

Life is full of challenges. And we measure ourselves and our success in life by how we meet those challenges . . . Challenge validates our aliveness and often disturbs the order of our lives.

—Barbara Jordan

An innate, searching curiosity about all around us—What do we not *know? How can we do it* differently? *How can we do it* better? *is at the heart of excellence. Then human progress and excellence comes when someone goes beyond "why" to "why not?"*

—John Glenn, U.S. senator, astronaut

This book is concerned with why some schools can significantly change, while most schools cannot or do not. To begin, we consider the human dynamics of change. In Chapter 1, I describe change, taking into account

theoretical models and human reactions; look at the reluctance to embrace change and the resistance it can cause; and consider the implications of change being described as unpredictable, nonlinear, and chaotic. I discuss the importance of routines being disrupted, assumptions being attacked, and the emotional nature of change.

In Chapter 2, I present the criteria for measuring the degree to which a school has significantly changed. In Chapter 3, I present the conceptual framework developed through the study of eight schools that changed from unacceptable to exemplary.

Questions we might ask include the following:

- Why is change appealing, exciting, and motivating to some people and not to others?
- What is the significance of the following point of view? "People like change but don't like being changed."
- How might an understanding of the human elements and dynamics of the change process help a principal charged with the task of significantly changing a school?

1

Describing Change

A chapter called "Describing Change" is, by its very nature, an oxymoron. Change, whether personal or professional, large or small, local or global, is a concept that defies definition or description. Although change can be tangible and obvious when we hold a cell phone or iPod in our hands, it is also intangible and elusive when policies and practices are changed. Change involves emotions and often defies logic. It is complicated and complex, yet much of the time most of us, as individuals, manage to deal with it. Organizations, such as schools, are not so fortunate; few are able to significantly change. Consequently, we need a better appreciation of change, as it plays out in schools.

There is no question change can be rewarding, even joyous. Frequently we seek change and fight hard for it. We celebrate change. We mark achievements. We are in awe of progress. The eight school portraits in this book symbolize the beauty and essence of change: determination, passion, and triumph.

Change frequently feels daunting, however. It can be difficult, very difficult—at times it can seem virtually impossible. Change endeavors can involve the practical and political, the rational and emotional, the subtle and the obvious. The impact can be immediate or distant. The desires of some individuals may be anathema to others; what is viewed as progress may be seen as a setback. We all do not view or react to change the same way; change involves an individual endeavor and experience and can feel like a struggle, a battle.

Looking through the lens of human dynamics, in this chapter I review how change and the change process have been described, particularly in regard to schools; consider the range of reactions to change; and reflect on what this means, in general, for leaders who try to change schools and, in particular, what it meant for the principals of the eight schools described in this book.

As we explore each of these descriptions of change, you might consider the efforts to change (or not change) in your personal and professional lives. Consider, in particular, the attempts at change in schools you and your family have attended, schools you have worked in, and schools you have observed or heard about.

A RELUCTANCE TO CHANGE DIRECTIONS

Roland Barth is a noted educational reformer and a highly skilled sailor. His love of the sea and his ability to navigate choppy waters have compelled him to use sailing as a metaphor for school change. He tells of a transmission of a U.S. Navy radio conversation:

Transmission: Please divert your course fifteen degrees north to avoid a collision.

Response: Recommend that you divert your course fifteen degrees south to avoid a collision.

Transmission: This is the captain of a U.S. Naval ship. I say again, divert your course.

Response: No, I say again, divert *your* course.

Transmission: This is the aircraft carrier Enterprise. We are a large warship of the U.S. Navy. Divert your course now!

Response: This is a lighthouse. Your call. (Barth, 2001, p. xxiv)

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Changing direction is not easy, especially for warships—and schools. Ogden and Germinaro (1995) believed we can understand the reasons for this reluctance to change by looking at the "essence" of a school, its underlying values and beliefs and how they are translated into practice. They looked at how schools define what they do, make decisions, and respond to parents and the community as well as how instruction is delivered, accountability is defined, and principals do their jobs. In their view, American schools can be classified in one of three categories: (1) conventional, (2) congenial, or (3) collegial.

Conventional schools were characterized by teacher autonomy and isolation, very little conversation among staff, and a feeling research and professional development are unnecessary. "These are schools that have no common goals, no collective sense of what they are trying to accomplish as a whole, as a school" (Ogden & Germinaro, 1995, p. 4). The principal served as a manager, keeping things moving along: Supplies were delivered, parent complaints were handled, discipline was maintained. Teacher evaluation was considered to be an intrusion, an unfortunate bureaucratic requirement, and a waste of time.

Positive assessments of conventional schools were generated by what was *not* happening—no major complaints or crises, no disruptions or violence, no staff grievances. If standardized test scores were low, it was because of the problems students brought to school. It was inevitable that some students would fail. In the eyes of the school, "a good year is one in which there have been few calls for change" (Ogden & Germinaro, 1995, p. 5). In conventional schools, administrators and teachers did not look at what they were doing or for a moment consider they could change direction.

The second category of schools was labeled *congenial*. They were very similar to the conventional schools, except the teacher isolation had broken down. These teachers did talk to each other; however, the conversations were about social activities (e.g., When are we having the staff holiday party?), not about student progress, teaching methods, or school success. The focus was on the adults, improving the school climate, and relieving their stress. The overriding concern was having a school where people were happy. There was little, if any, thought given to changing direction.

The third category was the *collegial* schools (also called *effective* or *professional* or *student outcome-based* schools). In these schools, "satisfaction is derived from professional work accomplished together and from the achievement of students" (Ogden & Germinaro, 1995, p. 7). In these schools, the principal served as an instructional leader, making sure everyone understood the message that all students could achieve. Conversations about students, teaching, new ideas, and vision were encouraged and valued. The staff welcomed research findings and found great merit in professional development. Time was provided to ask the hard questions, research and reassess, and take risks. These collegial schools constantly raised the bar for all students and staff. They believed data frequently had to be collected, disaggregated, and analyzed so continuous improvement could take place. The collegial schools were committed to changing direction.

Unfortunately, in the view of Ogden and Germinaro (1995), the vast majority of schools were conventional or congenial. Few were collaborative. Few had a commitment to change.

INEVITABLE RESISTANCE

American colonists in the 1770s were divided into three almost equal-sized groups. About one third was firmly committed to remaining British colonists, loyal servants of the king. In light of their political, economic, and social status, it was in their interests to maintain the status quo.

On the other end of the spectrum were the revolutionaries, who desperately wanted freedom from England. They were determined to do what it took to win independence. They would not be deterred. In the middle stood a third group, whose members were not sure which side to join. This metaphor speaks to the range of responses to proposed change: refusal to change direction, reluctance to

change direction (To which side do I turn? What's in it for me?), and a passion to bring about the change.

The same range of responses will exist in organizations, like schools, that are initiating change or responding to change. It is important to recognize and respect these different perspectives and responses. Principals who wish to be effective facilitators of change need to think carefully how to handle these reactions. For example: What is motivating the resisters? How can we gather more information about this resistance? Once we know more, what do we do? As for the change proponents, how do we reward and support them so we can keep them in our camp? Perhaps the most critical group is the middle group, intrigued by the change but reluctant to commit. Here we need to ask: How can we show them the proposed change is in their interests? What frightens them? What can we do to overcome their wariness?

The big question I address in this book, and critical to my research, is: Why do people firmly stay on their usual course, ignoring warnings (or incentives) to do otherwise? Whether it is personal change or organizational change, why do people resist? Reich (2000) wrote about resisters in the corporate world, but these reactions to proposed change will be familiar to educators. In both the worlds of business and education, change involves moving people to a new place, and often they don't want to go there. The excuses many people use include "That seems risky . . . let's go back to basics . . . it worked before . . . we're just fine the way we are . . . there will be unforeseen consequences" (Reich, 2000, p. 150).

Seymour Sarason (2002), in looking at educational reform, wrote that "resistance to change is as predictable as death and taxes" (p. 30). Therefore, as students of change, we must recognize and understand the many possible forms of resistance, how subtle resistance can be, and the depth it can reach. More disturbing for Sarason (2002) is that he has "never known an instance, or heard about one, where the new reformers *seriously and sincerely* sought to elicit the diagnoses of those who are now being asked to change their thinking and actions" (p. 31).

Conner (1995) outlined the main reasons for resisting change by noting that the initiation of change will be both rational and irrational, and the responses to it likewise will be rational and irrational. People do not trust impending change or those who would initiate such change; they believe change is unnecessary or not feasible; they resent interference. There is fear of failure and threats to values and ideals. People are being asked to leave their comfort zones, and naturally they will resist.

What Kotter (1996) found amazing is how change facilitators and managers do not take the time to think about who might resist change and why. In his view, organizational change will inevitably run into some form of human resistance, which will sometimes go underground and emerge again at a strategic time. Consequently, it is essential to understand the range of reactions to change, sometimes obvious, sometimes subtle, that may emerge. The problem is that leaders have not been prepared for transformational challenges (Kotter, 1996).

Nonetheless, resistance to change is not automatic. In fact, the onset of change can produce a variety of responses. As Tyack and Cuban (1995) put it,

"Educators have variously welcomed, improved, deflected, co-opted, modified, and sabotaged outside efforts at reform" (p. 7). Furthermore, when there is resistance, not all of it is uncalled for, irrational, or bad. It may be needed. "Resistance to change is sometimes dismissed as the result of popular ignorance or institutional inertia, but that oversimplifies. Often teachers have had well-founded reasons for resisting change, as have parents" (Tyack & Cuban, 1995, p. 7).

CHANGE IS UNPREDICTABLE

In August 2005, nature's fury and man's folly fused together as Hurricane Katrina uprooted the lives of hundreds of thousands. Packing the energy of a ten-megaton nuclear bomb, exploding every ten minutes, the hurricane devastated the Gulf region, leaving in its wake physical destruction and loss of life not experienced in the United States for more than a century (Thomas, 2005). The days leading up to the hurricane, the storm itself, and the aftermath provided insights about the unpredictable nature of change.

Tropical storms, including hurricanes, have been forecasted for decades in terms of when they will occur, where they will strike, and their anticipated force. We have sophisticated software models, satellites beaming critical information, and complex mathematical formulas. With all our technology, human error is supposed to be virtually eliminated. Hurricane Katrina's approach was being tracked, with initial predictions that the storm would slam directly into the historic city of New Orleans. Then, the predictions were changed; New Orleans would be spared. Finally, both predictions proved wrong. The hurricane did not frontally smash into New Orleans; however, it did take a furious swipe at the city, causing damage and loss of life that defied expectations and explanations.

Life defies predictability. Whether a monstrous act of nature, a terrible family tragedy, or a sweeping and drastic change in an organization, no one knows for sure how things will unfold.

Loss of life is certainly far different than changes in routines or attacks on assumptions, yet we cannot escape the unpredictability of our daily lives. In reflecting on school change, Fullan (1993) noted that "Complexity, dynamism, and unpredictability, in other words, are not merely things that get in the way. They are normal!" (p. 20).

The professional lives of educators are, for the most part, predicated on predictability. The students arrive in September (or late August) and depart with the onset of summer. Classroom activities in elementary schools are centered on the seasons and holidays, with Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas, Valentine's Day, Easter, and Memorial Day serving as reliable markers. Routines and rules for students are assumed and expected. The school day begins and ends at the prescribed times. Unlike most other professionals who control their schedules, such as doctors, lawyers, and scientists, teachers typically report to the same location, at the same time of the day, teaching in the same ways. Consequently, changes in schools that deviate from that predictability are hard to acknowledge, accept, or appreciate.

THE NONLINEAR NATURE OF
THE CHANGE PROCESS

Perhaps one of the most ambitious initiatives of the 1990s was Bill and Hillary Clinton's effort to radically change health care in America. Although the former President and his wife understood that the reform would not be easy to achieve, they counted on a rational and logical sequence of steps: Dramatize the need, bring together experts to suggest solutions, develop a plan, build favorable and supportive public opinion, and have the new plan adopted. The health care reformers, led by the Clintons, did not realize how differently people would feel about the need, how resistant opponents would be, or how hard it would be to develop a consensus. Their campaign took one step forward and two steps back. It was sideswiped, detoured, and had to shift gears. As logical as it seemed to be to provide health care to Americans who could not afford it, their attempt to change the health care system failed in 1994.

As Hillary Clinton, chairwoman of the President's Task Force on National Health Care Reform, looked back, she noted,

> Our goals were simple enough. We wanted a plan that dealt with all aspects of the health care system rather than one that tinkered on the margins. We wanted a process that considered a variety of ideas and allowed for healthy discussion and debate . . . Almost immediately, we hit turbulence. (H. Clinton, 2003, p. 153)

Clinton remembers being advised that the proposed reform was massive and would take at least five years. She was urged to learn from the efforts of previous presidents who had advocated health care reform, such as Harry Truman, Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon, and Jimmy Carter. Furthermore, she later realized that personal passion and enthusiasm for change were not enough.

We can learn many lessons about the nonlinear nature of change from this case study. First, some people may oppose a proposed change because they believe the change contradicts their value system. In this case, many conservatives felt the proposed health care plan would give too much control to the government and cost too much. Second, public support for an idea can become derailed. When it became known that increased costs for health care would impact most families, public support (once quite strong) evaporated. Third, required partners might have competing interests. In this case, members of Congress were dependent on major campaign funding from the private health care industry, and most legislators could not risk cutting those ties. Fourth, opponents to a proposed change can launch a powerful fight against it. In this case, lobbyists and special interest groups opposed to a national health care program used multiple strategies, including designing effective advertising, conducting massive mailings, forming coalitions, and applying pressure everywhere (Laham, 1998). Fifth, individual self-centered interests can overshadow

a plan to help others; the fundamental question becomes "What's in it for me?" Neither members of Congress nor the majority of Americans were willing to set aside their own interests to support health care for the minority of Americans. As Dougherty (1996) put it, "The failed attempt at reform by the Clinton administration is the long-standing and significant mismatch between the value aspirations of most Americans for universal coverage combined with a reluctance to accept the tax increase necessary to pay for it" (p. 10). Finally, initiating and implementing a change requires a careful look at how others might react. In this case, that was not done. Change did not move ahead, logically, step by step.

Change has traditionally been interpreted as a rational, linear, and neat process. Starting in the late 1980s and 1990s, researchers and practitioners challenged that view. Adams (1991) offered a distinction between *rational* and *interactive* models by calling the former "basically sequential, observable, and capable of being evaluated[, while] interactive models, on the other hand, reflect an emphasis on the human dynamics of decision making" (p. 8).

In effect, the linear model fails to consider what is important to the "players" in a change process: how they interpret what is happening, how they react to that process, and what they will do to support or oppose the changes being proposed or implemented. As Hamilton (1991) put it, "If it is people who give an organization meaning and if it's people who actually do the planning, then it is people, not abstract models, who need to be understood through planning actions" (p. 43).

Burke (2002) pointed out that change leaders will frequently plan change as if it were a linear process, with one neat step following another, only to discover that neither planning nor implementation is linear, neat, smooth, or rational:

> The implementation process is messy: Things don't proceed exactly as planned; people do things their own way, not always according to plan; some people resist or even sabotage the process; and some people who would have been predicted to support or resist the plan actually behave in the opposite way. In short, unanticipated consequences occur. (p. 2)

As Tyack and Cuban (1995) pointed out, "Reformers who adopt a rational planning mode of educational reform sometimes expect that they will improve schools if they design their policies correctly" (p. 83). It's not that simple. We never start completely from scratch; we never leave everything behind; we never move in neat and precise steps:

> Innovations never enter educational institutions with the previous slate wiped clean . . . Rational planners may have plans for schools, and may blame practitioners if they think that the plans are not properly implemented, but schools are not wax to be imprinted. (Tyack & Cuban, 1995, p. 83)

CHAOS THEORY

Chaos theory is an attempt to make sense of what doesn't seem to make sense. When Burke (2002) talks about chaos theory, he reminds us "even though not apparent when in the midst of change, patterns do exist" (p. 288).

In the mid-1990s, dire predictions were being made about crime, especially with regard to teenage crime, which was expected to rise by as much as 100% over the following decade. "The smart money was on the criminals" (Levitt & Dubner, 2005, p. 4). However, these forecasts were very wrong. Instead of crime going up, it dramatically and persistently fell and continued to fall in every crime category, in every section of the United States. For example, between 1995 and 2000, teenage crime did not rise by 100% as predicted; it fell by 50%!

Criminologists, sociologists, politicians, and the public wanted to know why. A set of logical theories was suggested. The decline was due to a robust economy, the proliferation of gun control laws, more sophisticated policing strategies. However, Levitt and Dubner (2005) contended that the cause of the crime decrease took shape twenty years earlier and involved a young woman in Dallas, Texas, named Norma McCorvey: "Like the proverbial butterfly that flaps his wings on one continent and eventually causes a hurricane on another, Norma McCorvey dramatically altered the course of events without intending to. All she wanted was an abortion" (p. 5).

McCorvey was 21, poor, uneducated, unskilled, and addicted to drugs and alcohol. She had already put two children up for adoption, and abortion was illegal in Texas. Advocates seeking the legalization of abortion adopted McCorvey and made her the lead plaintiff in a class-action lawsuit. McCorvey became Jane Roe, whose legal rights were contested by Henry Wade, the Dallas County district attorney. Ultimately, the *Roe v. Wade* case reached the U.S. Supreme Court which, on January 22, 1973, ruled in favor of McCorvey.

What did this have to do with the dramatic decrease in crime? Decades of studies had shown that "a child born into an adverse family environment is far more likely than other children to become a criminal" (Levitt & Dubner, 2005, p. 6). Levitt and Dubner (2005) contended that "because of *Roe vs. Wade* these children *weren't* being born. This powerful cause would have dramatic, distant effect years later; just as these unborn children would have entered their criminal primes, the rate of crime began to plummet" (p. 6). One change (legalization of abortion), on its surface, seemed to have nothing to do with the other (decrease in crime).

Similarly, supposedly random phenomena in the school world can converge and cause unexpected and unwanted results. For example, a decision to end social promotion for eighth-graders and instead prevent them from entering the ninth grade has several unanticipated consequences. Under the *No Child Left Behind (NLCB)* federal legislation, the school loses funding, which further impairs the school's ability to serve students with weak skills. By including the eighth-grade students who have been held back, the size of eighth-grade classes increases the following year. This same social promotion

decision leads to tracking and lowered expectations for the students who did not advance to the next grade. Behavior problems in the school increase, time is diverted from instruction, and teacher morale plummets. Academic performance gets worse, not better.

In response to the concept of chaos theory, Senge (2006) advanced the concept of *systems thinking*, which suggests that we should view things not as snapshots (e.g., a decline in student attendance) but instead as a system, which takes into account actions taken at different places and times (e.g., state policy changes the way school attendance is calculated; an economic recession keeps students at home, taking care of siblings; dangerous schools discourage attendance, etc.).

CHANGE DISRUPTS OUR ROUTINES

What if you were told that if you did not change, you would die? Ninety percent of the individuals who received that "change or die" warning *did not change* (Deutschman, 2005). According to research completed by physicians, psychologists, and neuroscientists, when patients received their instructions after bypass surgery, almost all of them did not follow the prescribed advice. They did not change their diet, begin to exercise, or return for regular checkups. A large number of these patients suffered a heart attack, and some did die. Why didn't these vulnerable individuals change? In the words of Dr. Edward Miller, dean of the medical school at Johns Hopkins University, "Even though they know they have a very bad disease and they know they should change their lifestyle, for whatever reason, they can't" (Deutschman, 2005, p. 52). Even though their habits were literally and figuratively deadly, these individuals resisted the disruption to their routines.

As mentioned previously, the nature of schools in America is quite predictable because the routines have been set in place for years, perhaps decades, for both teachers and students. In Sizer's (1984) words,

> the basic organizing structures are familiar. Above all, students are grouped by age (that is freshman, sophomore, junior, senior), and are all expected to take precisely the same time—around 720 school days over four years, to be precise—to meet the requirements for a diploma. (p. 78)

These are not new routines for American high schools; one can find them in "The Seven Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education," promulgated in 1918 by the National Education Association (Raubinger, Rowe, Piper, & West, 1969). Disrupting those routines has not been impossible; neither has it been easy.

Barth (1990) lamented about the routine nature of education:

> For most [school staff] there is little to do this September except what they did last September—more of the same. Same books, same room,

same colleagues, same curriculum. Only pupils are different from one year to the next. But the burden for the professional health of adults in schools should not rest with the students. (Barth, 1990, p. 12)

CHANGE CHALLENGES OUR ASSUMPTIONS

The *Concise Oxford American Dictionary* (2006) defines the noun *assumption* as "a thing that is accepted as true or as certain to happen, without proof" (p. 48). The *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (2006) defines it as "the act of taking for granted . . . *the assumption of a false thing*." Moreover, the dictionary adds "presumption; arrogance" (p. 110). In a study of change, we must pay special attention to assumptions, because they drive what we do, whether or not they are "true."

The following are two examples. In the late 1400s, Christopher Columbus had a hard time convincing people the world was round, not flat. Columbus argued he could sail east and not fall off the edge of the world. He challenged the existing assumptions about the shape of the earth and travel routes. He was right. Christopher Columbus literally and figuratively opened new worlds.

Five hundred and fifteen years after Columbus won his argument in 1492 that the world is round, Thomas Friedman (2005) challenged our assumptions about how work is completed because he contends (metaphorically) that "the world is flat." For example, we assume that our accountant in New York or Los Angeles is calculating our tax returns, but that is not true, because a worker in India is doing the grunt work. Or we expect CAT scans completed in American hospitals to be interpreted and diagnosed by radiologists at these hospitals; however, radiologists in Australia are interpreting them.

Friedman (2005) made the case that the world is flat, and he wants us to let go of the ways we have traditionally seen things. From Friedman's perspective, the twenty-first century world is flat because communication between any two (or more) parts of the world can be accomplished in seconds, via new networks. A level playing field opens opportunities in ways never imagined before; knowledge no longer stays within narrow domains but can be accessed with ease and speed. Friedman contends that

> it is now possible for more people than ever to collaborate and compete in real time with more other people on more different kinds of work from more different corners of the planet and on a more equal footing than at any previous time in the history of the world—using computers, e-mail, networks, teleconferencing, and dynamic new software. (p. 8)

The world is round; the world is flat. Are we being forced to dramatically change our assumptions, our perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes? Yes. Will this be easy? No. Are educational decisions and practices based on assumptions? Absolutely.

The New York Times headline read, "Stressed. Scared. Nauseous. Sick." These sound like the reactions of educators to proposed change. Instead, these are

words used by nine- and ten-year-olds to describe how they felt about an impending fourth-grade reading test. To allay their fears, social workers at their public school in Brooklyn introduced the students to the "Test Monster," an art exercise designed to enable these students to express and manage their fears. The students knew much was at stake because this examination, spurred on by the *NCLB* federal legislation, would determine whether they would be promoted from the third grade to the fourth grade and whether their school would be labeled as failing (Herszenhorn, 2006, p. B1).

Consider the educational assumptions revealed by this anecdote.

- First assumption: Teachers would commit to guaranteeing "no child would be left behind" only if there were serious sanctions for their schools, such as a loss in federal funding.
- Second assumption: Student achievement could best be measured by performance on state-designed tests.
- Third assumption: Children could (and should) be prepared for high-stakes tests by reducing their anxiety level.
- Fourth assumption: Requiring students to repeat a grade will enable those students to bolster their academic skills.

In looking at assumptions, what are the implications for change facilitators? It doesn't matter whether assumptions are believed to be well founded, based on experience, or data driven. It often does not matter if certain assumptions are outdated. What does matter is that assumptions drive what we do. As Wagner and his research team noted, "It is not easy to call into question and alter the assumptions we have taken as truths . . . Habits of mind can be as intractable as habits of behavior" (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 167).

In terms of change efforts, consider the impact of attacks on assumptions. For example, if a large number of teachers believe academic achievement can best (and perhaps only) be measured by mandated testing, then "teaching to the test" will probably be central to their instructional practices. For the veteran teachers, this assumption may have driven what they did and how they did it for many years. However, a new school reform program could declare that teaching to the test is "wrong." Instead, the teachers could be urged or required to teach differently, focusing on constructivism, inquiry, and student projects. Telling these teachers their assumptions are wrong will be experienced as a threatening, even devastating, attack. We need to understand that possible reaction and be prepared to deal with it.

CHANGE IS STRESSFUL

On the face of it, Robert Sapolsky, an anthropologist and biologist, who won one of the MacArthur "Genius" awards, has nothing in common with Spencer Johnson, a physician who became a popular author with *Who Moved My Cheese?* (1998). Johnson's parable, translated into 25 languages, has sold more than 3 million copies and has been used in hundreds of workshops that focus on

change. Sapolsky's (2004) informal biology text, *Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers*, on the other hand, is a mainstay among academics and popular with the general public. However, the two authors are joined by a fascination with rodents (real and imagined) and reactions to change.

Sapolsky (2004) looked at the physiological consequences of stress and described the dilemma of zebras. He asked us to think like a zebra as he pointed out,

> For animals like zebras, the most upsetting things in life are *acute physical* crises. You are that zebra, a lion has just leapt out and ripped your stomach open, you've managed to get away, and now you have to spend the next hour evading the lion as it continues to stalk you. (p. 4)

You, to say the least, are quite stressed.

Using numerous studies of rats, Sapolsky (2004) contended that the second cause of stress is *chronic physical challenges,* and the third way to get upset, most germane to this book, are *psychological and social* disruptions. Unlike rats and zebras, social primates such as baboons and humans do not need physical dangers to cause stress. We can imagine it. We can "experience wildly strong emotions (provoking our bodies into an accompanying uproar) linked to mere thoughts" (Sapolsky, 2004, p. 5).

Johnson (1998), recognizing how change produces stress, used the metaphor of two mice and two "littlepeople" and their experiences in a maze. In this case, there is a disruption to feeding patterns: The cheese disappeared; it had been moved. Sniff and Scurry, the two mice, quickly moved on to find out where the cheese was, but the "littlepeople," Hem and Haw, were flabbergasted. As Johnson (1998) described it, "No one had warned them. It wasn't right. It was not the way things were supposed to be" (p. 35). Hem and Haw were immobilized, angry, frustrated, and in a state of denial. They blamed each other for their troubles and finally realized "We keep doing the same things over and over again and wonder why things don't get better" (p. 43). These two littlepeople were seriously stressed and had much difficulty embracing change.

Understanding that change can be very stressful is important for leaders of school change. As Hall and Hord (2006) pointed out,

> Although everyone wants to talk about such broad concepts as policy, systems, and organizational factors, successful change starts and ends at the individual level. An entire organization does not change until each member has changed. Another way to say this is that there is an individual aspect to organizational change. (p. 7)

Evans (1996) was concerned with the "human side of school change" and, as such, he addressed the issue of stress. He used a medical metaphor to make his points about pressure, stress, and the ability to adjust and cope. Treatment of a medical symptom will be affected by the person's overall health, including that individual's ability to handle the additional stress that comes with the cure itself. Furthermore,

American schools, trapped between rising demands and limited resources, have become textbook cases of stress . . . In everyday speech we refer to stress almost as a kind of infection that we can catch. To medical researchers, stress is internal, the reaction within an organism when the demands of the external environments tax its ability to cope. (Evans, 1996, p. 130)

In the early 1990s, Day and his colleagues used case studies of twelve schools in England to discover the roles of headteachers (i.e., principals) in implementing change (Day et al., 2000). They considered how these school leaders affected change and how the change effort affected them. These headteachers worked very hard and had to cope with high levels of stress. Although these leaders handled the stress in different ways, such as going to the gym, relying on family, pursuing an active social life outside of work, and becoming active in union activities, "stress was a constant feature of their work" (Day et al., 2000, p. 71).

THE EMOTIONAL ARENA

It is clear that we enter the emotional arena when we deal with change, as either the initiators of that change and, even more so, when we are impacted by the change. As Kotter (1996) pointed out, all of us experience some turmoil. Even when the change appears to be rational or positive, change involves loss and uncertainty. Resistance is virtually inevitable for one (or more) of these reasons: "A desire not to lose something of value, a misunderstanding of the change and its implications, a belief that the change does not make sense for the organization, and low tolerance for change" (Kotter, 1996, p. 31).

For example, when Mayor Michael Bloomberg took control of the New York City school system in 2001, all four forms of Kotter's (1996) theory of resistance were quite evident. Thirty-two community school district school boards were upset because they perceived (correctly) they would *lose power.* Thirty-two community school district superintendents *misunderstood* why the mayor, and his new chancellor, Joel Klein, reorganized the system into ten regions for the purpose of implementing more direct accountability. Central office bureaucrats, desperate to keep their jobs during a far-reaching organizational shakeup, tried to justify their positions, claiming that the *changes did not make sense.* Finally, teachers who were required to adopt one standard literacy curriculum had *low tolerance* for this prescribed shift in teaching methods. Previously, teachers were free to teach as they saw fit and they did not have to "march to the beat of the same drummer." Officials in the newly named Department of Education knew resistance was inevitable, but they had underestimated the fears it would generate.

Fears take many different forms. "Will I be able to handle this?" is a frightening, but not uncommon, question. With both personal and professional

changes, new attitudes, skills, and behaviors will be required. At the same time, all of us have limits, and some may find the new requirements overwhelming. In the worst-case scenario, the changes simply may demand too much, too quickly (Kotter, 1999).

There is also fear of the unknown. In Zimbalist's (2005) words, "Many teachers who have developed personal styles and curriculum bases feel comfortable where they are. Perhaps fear of the unknown feeds their reluctance to embrace a new direction" (p. 115).

James and Connolly (2000) conducted a study of 32 schools in South Wales in the late 1990s and looked at the "reactions, the successes and failures and the accounts of those involved in bringing about change" (p. 14). They concluded that

> Change is complex because it is inextricably linked to our emotions. Imposed change [in particular] can call up a whole range of emotions: anger at the imposition and the denial of personal autonomy, sorrow at the sense of loss of the old, and anxiety at the uncertainties that the new will bring. (James & Connolly, 2000, p. 17)

Goleman (1995) wrote that "I take *emotion* to refer to a feeling and its distinctive thoughts, psychological and biological states, and a range of propensities to act" (pp. 289–290). Entering the emotional arena does not mean only difficulty, pain, and suffering. Psychologists point to both "positive" emotions (e.g., joy) and "negative" emotions (e.g., anger). Both types will be generated by substantial change.

Brooke-Smith (2003) felt that the literature about change has ignored or downplayed the role of anxiety, which she felt is at the heart of the change process. In her view, anxiety can at times work as an asset in the change process. Leaders, to create a felt need for change, may welcome a certain level of anxiety in the organization.

> On the other hand, anxiety, if unrecognized, unappreciated, or misunderstood could rise to "out of control" levels. Too much anxiety will be experienced as a significant threat; the existing system may become dysfunctional and unstable; and oppositional political activity may be created. The change endeavor will become derailed. (Brooke-Smith, 2003, p. 106)

In effect, if change generates anger, fear, sorrow, or loss, it becomes painful. Perhaps it has to be that way. Sizer (1991) contended that meaningful change in schools is, by necessity, painful: "To get the needed gains for kids, we adults must expect and endure the pain that comes with ambitious rethinking and redesign of schools. To pretend that serious restructuring can be done without honest confrontation is to create an illusion" (p. 34).

SO MUCH TO DO, SO LITTLE TIME

Bringing about school change has been described as trying to change a flat tire when the car is in motion. From 1995 to 1998, Hargreaves, Earl, Moore, and Manning (2001) looked at twenty-nine teachers in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, who were implementing integrated curriculum reform in their seventh- and eighth-grade classes. They wanted to know how these teachers were adjusting to a mandated curriculum policy. Were they able to accept and apply the changes to their daily practice? What conditions and support were needed for them to be able to do so? Was there a preferred process for bringing about these changes? One of their most important findings relates to the changing-tire analogy:

> The teachers we studied were not just trying to implement single innovations, one at a time. They were facing multiple and multifaceted changes to their practice . . . moreover, this set of changes could not be addressed in isolation from other aspects of their work in their schools. (Hargreaves et al., 2001, p. 23)

> Linda Darling-Hammond (1997b) described the problem in another way:

> It might be said that Americans are always fixing their schools. Each decade another set of fads emerges (often recycled ideas with new names) . . . Schools are usually asked to adopt these fads as single ideas laid on top of old structures. Such ideas are poorly assimilated and quickly rejected. Schools chew up and spit out undigested reforms on a regular basis. This creates a sense within schools, that whatever the innovation, "this too shall pass"—and that it probably should. (p. 22)

Consider what we have discussed in this chapter. Schools are asked to continue functioning; schools are asked to change. Teachers are counted on to do their jobs; teachers are encouraged or required to reconsider what they do. Principals are asked to be managers, maintaining the status quo and making sure all runs smoothly; principals must look beyond the status quo in an effort to initiate, implement, and sustain change.

Change brings good things; change is resisted. Organizational and institutional change is a logical, step-by-step process; change is irrational and nonlinear. Precise things are forecasted; change, by its nature, is unpredictable. Change is presumed to be a fresh start; we bring our past to the present. Change is neat; change is messy.

We celebrate change; we fear it. Change produces joy; change produces anxiety. Change is easy; change is difficult. Change is contradictory. Our actions are grounded in our fundamental assumptions and our familiar routines; however, impending change may attack those assumptions and disrupt those routines. What we believe in may be challenged.

Although Niccolo Machiavelli (1910/1992) is often cast as a cynical political advisor, he is also viewed as an astute student of human nature, with insights that 16th-century rulers found useful. Writing about change, Machiavelli noted, "It must be considered that there is nothing more difficult to carry out, nor more doubtful of success, nor more dangerous to handle, than to initiate a new order of things" (p. 13).