

Partners in Learning
Learning to Lead Change: Building System Capacity
Leadership for Change Library

The Learning Leader

Douglas Reeves

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221 pages

Based on Reeves extensive applied, practical research around the world and his detailed work in North America, this book brings together Reeves ideas on leadership including reporting on a new study involving 300,000 students in 290 schools.

The book focuses on Reeves leadership learning framework which cross-connects *antecedents of excellence* with *achievement of results* coming up with four categories of schools: Lucky (high results, low understanding of antecedents), Losing (low results, low understanding), Learning (low results, understanding of antecedents), and Leading (high results, high understanding).

Based on his own empirical research, Reeves shows that the larger the planning document, the less the quality and quantity of action. Yes, the size of the school improvement or district plan is inversely correlated with the quality of implementation. What works, Reeves says, is schools that are strong on: inquiry, implementation, monitoring — and leadership that fosters the same.

Reeves also identifies and dispels five myths that interfere with action for improvement:

- Myth #1: People are happy doing what they are doing now. Teachers in unsuccessful schools would rather continue to be unsuccessful than engage in alternative practices that might lead to student success.
- Myth #2: People resist change because of irrational fear.
- Myth #3: You can't make significant changes until you get buy-in from everybody.
- Myth #4: You must have perfect research to support a proposed change.
- Myth #5: The risk of change is so great that you must wait until you have things perfectly organized before implementing change efforts.

Reeves then proposes using the leadership framework to focus on what matters by identifying and monitoring achievement results and linking them to specific antecedents that *cause* improvement. Leaders need to hone their ideas, skills and actions for helping the school make these causal connections.

Reeves advocates more focused action-oriented work on inquiry, implementation, monitoring, and more action. His goal is to help leaders and the system move from "islands of excellence to systemic impact."

Why We Like This Book

Reeves is tough on and irreverent when it comes to superficial strategies that look good on paper but are devoid of substance. We love his no-nonsense dismissal of *documentarianism* — change by paper plans — in favor of real change which is *messy* but doable. Action oriented leadership follows practices of reviewing data, making midcourse corrections and focusing on decision-making on the greatest points of leverage. He embarrasses us into action and then helps with powerful concepts, actions and specific ideas for causing positive change. This book is great because it combines specific research and data with big concepts and ideas. It spurs action and puts it in the perspective of both the small and the big picture.



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