**Effective principals skillfully design and lead change.**

“Make a friend of change.” (Chinese proverb).

**Change** [cheynj] -*verb:* To make the form, nature, content, future course, etc. of something different from what it would be if left alone. (Dictionary.com).

**Navigation** (nav-i-gey-shun’)- *noun*: The art and science of plotting, ascertaining, and directing the course of a vessel toward a chosen destination (Dictionary.com).

In nautical terms, the officers and crew of seagoing vessels have the ability to choose a destination for a voyage that is different from where the ship might naturally drift, and then use all means available- sails, rudder, the stars, maps, GPS satellites…to move toward that chosen destination. This process is called navigation. Navigation toward a chosen destination must be active. The sea is a changing environment and often unpredictable. To reach the destination requires timely moves- changes in rudder, sail, and weight distribution keep the vessel on track through changing tides, winds, currents, and weather.Occasionally, when the sea is exceptionally turbulent, or thick with pirates, the best course is to change destinations, if only temporarily, in order to preserve integrity of the ship and the lives of the crew.

The job of school principal is, in most ways, unrelated to the job of a sea captain. Technically, the two careers have little in common. In two important ways, however, they are similar. Both careers are built on the premise that a collective of people can intentionally choose a destination and not merely drift about. And, both careers require the skill of ***active navigation***.

Successful change leaders do well to position the need for change as active navigation. Absent the understanding that that change is the positive, proactive approach to arriving at one’s destination, it is easy, in fact natural, to view change as negative, external, and corrective. Educators, like all people, are drawn to growth, learning, improvement, development, adaptation, and reinvention. These dimensions of change generate engagement and commitment. When change is perceived to be a management response to obsolescence, underperformance, or ineffectiveness, it is natural for educators, like all people, to retreat to compliance or even resistance.

John Dewey is credited with the quote: “We don’t learn from experience. We learn from processing our experience.” In building a school leader’s capacity to lead change, it is helpful to remember that experiencing change is not the same as understanding it. Every educator has experienced change. In fact, change is so common and pervasive that even relatively young educators are likely to feel well- versed in the topic.

Over time, as one reflects and processes dealings with change, meaningful patterns can emerge from the contextual field of our experiences. These patterns may remain largely invisible to novice leaders, or appear chaotic, random, and without meaningful pattern. One of the marks of expertise is the ability to see patterns, connections, and relationships where others do not. (Bransford, et al., 2000). A chess master, for example, can see patterns and potential moves in a chess game that a novice would likely not notice.