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! !! "DON'T HOPE, DECIDE! ... DON'T HOPE, DESIGN!" !! !

Years ago, I encountered a story by Michael Hargrove that fundamentally reshaped how I approach my role as an educator and leader. The story, simple yet profound, highlights a critical truth that I've carried with me ever since.

Michael was at an airport, waiting to pick up a friend, when he witnessed a touching reunion between a man and his family. The man embraced each of his children with deep affection, expressing pride and love in a way that spoke volumes. Finally, he turned to his wife, and their embrace was so passionate that Michael felt as if he were witnessing the reunion of newlyweds, even though their children's ages suggested they had been married for many years.

Curious and moved by what he saw, Michael commented, "I hope my marriage is still that passionate after twelve years!" The man's response was both surprising and powerful:



"Don't hope, friend...decide!"

This message resonated deeply with me and has influenced how I lead and live. When I had the honor of delivering the matriculation speech for my TNT cohort, I shared this same story. I urged new teachers not to simply hope for their students' success but to decide on it. I encouraged them to decide that their classrooms would be places of love, care, and high expectations. I asked them to decide that they would be great teachers.

Today, as I lead Odyssey Alliance, I've taken this message a step further. It's not just about deciding; it's about designing.

Don't Hope, Design! It's a call to action for all leaders and educators. Success doesn't happen by chance; it happens by design. Design the right systems to achieve your goals. Design for the right outcomes, lasting change, and meaningful impact. Be intentional in creating systems that amplify your initiatives and meet your target populations where they are.

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As system leaders, we must bridge the gap between intention and execution. It's not enough to hope for improvement; we must actively design the pathways that lead to it. This involves establishing accountability, tracking progress, measuring impact, adapting strategies, and continuously learning.

Only by designing with intention can we achieve the powerful outcomes we seek, where every stakeholder is aligned toward the same goal.



CEO, Chief Strategist
Akeish Forsythe
Founded In 2022

Chief Strategist and Consultant with over 18 years of experience in organizational development, strategic visioning, and program analysis. A respected thought leader, Akeish has partnered with national and international governments, non-profits, and educational institutions to design impactful systems that drive sustainable change. Her work focuses on leveraging data and intentional design to create powerful outcomes that transform organizations and the communities they serve.

Akeish is passionate about moving beyond hope to strategic action, ensuring that every decision is purposeful and every outcome meaningful.

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