

Foreword

Samuel Johnson is reported to have once observed, “that which is written without pleasure shall be read without pleasure.” (As one who has read his share of doctoral dissertations, I can attest to the veracity of his words!) But the converse is also true: That which is written *with* pleasure shall be read with pleasure.

The little volume you are about to read was clearly written with a great deal of pleasure. And I am confident that you will find pleasure in reading it. I have!

For me, the pleasure comes from the authors’ identification and analysis of a phenomenon in our schools of which I have been largely unaware: that the adults who staff our schools—teachers, principals, guidance counselors, librarians, custodians—come from four distinct generations, each of which represents a dramatically different culture. And I had been unaware of how desperately this topic needs to become a “discussable” in our schools.

We educators are all too aware of the many divides that characterize (and often imperil) our schools: teacher and administrator, adult and child, male and female, black and white, smart and not as smart. Well, the divides among our colleagues, the Veterans (born 1922–1943), the Baby Boomers (born 1944–1960), Generation X (born 1960–1980), and the Millennials (born 1980–2000), are every bit as consequential, if not as apparent.

The characteristics and idiosyncrasies that members of each of these generations bring into the schoolhouse have an extraordinary influence on the day-to-day life of the school and on its culture.

Unfortunately, too often these influences are damaging to our relationships with one another and to the important work we aspire to do of educating youngsters.

While we cannot change these givens, while we cannot mandate harmony, uniformity, and collegiality, we *can* understand them. And

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understanding them is the first step in transforming these differences from a curse into a blessing.

The gift of the book you are about to encounter is that it helps us understand our multigenerational workforce. And equally valuable, it offers very specific and helpful tips for addressing what the authors call our “employee stew” (e.g., school leaders can play up the role of the Veteran as “honored historian by emphasizing the need to take newcomers under their wing and share their wisdom”).

Each generation can benefit from the different perspectives and strengths of the others. So just as the multiaged classroom offers many advantages in promoting students’ learning, so can the multiaged school-house offer advantages in building a professional learning community.

It’s been said that the true act of discovery lies not in seeing new lands but in seeing with new eyes. You, dear reader, are in store for a major discovery!

—Roland S. Barth