
Preface

In a sense, leadership can be likened to a craft where knowledge, skills, and practices are of little use unless there is a functional purpose to one's work. However, one who aspires to a craft or to lead is at a loss if he/she has a functional purpose but lacks the knowledge, skills, or practices to work toward or to achieve that end.

—Carl D. Glickman (2008)

No role in school leadership's scope of responsibility today looms larger than that of providing instructional oversight and guidance. Principals—as CEOs of schools—are expected to ensure that good instruction and learning are taking place. Although the principal's desk still symbolizes the place where the buck stops, the principal is by no means the sole source of leadership in most schools today. A more integrated, democratic approach to today's principalship is not merely preferred; it is increasingly essential for dealing well with the nature of today's schools and students. Handling the complex nature of fast-paced change on many fronts and meeting the plurality of student needs demand more participation from stakeholders and the rich resources of multiple talent and skill that can only come from team-based leadership. This book deals most specifically with the principal's role in facilitating leadership that integrates multiple sources, including teachers, students, parents, and community members.

Although this toolbox text is written from the perspective that shared leadership is the preferred orientation for today's school leaders in all of a principal's domains of responsibility, it clearly focuses on instructional leadership and the principal's role in best fulfilling the responsibilities of this vital function. The job of the principal has evolved to one of mobilizer of these many leadership resources. When a principal is skilled in team building and empowering others, leadership can emerge from many of these stakeholder pools. Especially critical to the important function of instructional leadership is the role of teachers as instructional leaders and partners. Though this book is written expressly for principals, much of the

information is rooted in the premise that principals and teachers work as partners to provide instructional leadership, with parents and students also involved appropriately in decisions impacting their education. Thus, a primary role for the principal is facilitating such partnerships.

Whether one thinks of school leadership as craft, art, or science, tools are basic to each field. This book offers the principal a compendium of skills, strategies, and information that should enhance (not prescribe) principals' work as craftspersons, artisans, and scientists, especially in the area of instructional leadership. The tools are drawn from the best that research and theory in school administration have to offer today. From this important, but often abstract and obscure knowledge base comes my attempt to organize, synthesize, and reframe the strategies into more practical, thought-provoking formats. Although the text is reader friendly, with frequent abbreviated lists and bulleted points for the principal, it is no monkey-see, monkey-do read. Instead of sure cures and formulas for success, this book offers a set of metaphorical, cognitive tools, which in the hands of reflective educators can help them grow professionally and hone their skills to facilitate better teaching and learning in their own unique settings.

This, the second edition of the book, includes the following revisions:

- It includes updated standards, research, and legislation that have emerged since the original 2003 publication. The latest National Association of Elementary School Principals' and the Interstate Leadership Licensure Consortium's standards are found in Chapters 1 and 2.
- New, exciting research that more specifically ties principals' behavior to student achievement is explained and referenced throughout the text.
- Discussion of the status and impact of the No Child Left Behind legislation is included.
- Quotes and examples of instructional leadership strategies given by practicing principals and veteran educators are featured, especially in the "Walking the Talk" sections added at the end of chapters.
- There is a special section at the end of the book titled "Additional Resources," which includes selected Web sites, workbooks, books, and articles relevant to the chapters.

Tools as Metaphors

The tool metaphor is used throughout this text, with each of the ten chapters presented as a tool having particular potential for helping school principals improve their leadership skill, and thus the school's capacity to help children learn.

Chapter 1 sets the stage for the entire text by helping the reader understand the importance of all educators—and most certainly principals as

instructional leaders—to possess and strategically use an internal compass when making decisions, solving problems, and answering difficult professional questions in light of what is best for students and their learning. Glickman (1985) reminds us, “While research and experience help us see the connections between actions and outcomes, they cannot select our goals for us. In this regard, values and beliefs become central” (p. 342). School leaders’ introspection and examination of their beliefs and values, and their assessment and awareness of their professional strengths and weaknesses, are the tools offered in this chapter as essential enablers for principals’ providing instructional guidance at its best.

Chapter 2 deals with the nuts and bolts of school leadership, which include the importance of school leaders being reflective and well read about today’s leadership issues; understanding accountability and standards for twenty-first century school principals; and being up to date and aware of a principal’s key role in instructional leadership. These nuts-and-bolts understandings are fundamental tools of a school leader, regardless of the context or the leadership style.

Chapter 3 is about basic processes and products, the blueprints that guide the daily operation of the school and channel its energy most appropriately toward students and learning. The stakeholder-shared processes involved in creating a school’s mission, vision, goals and objectives, and strategies (i.e., the blueprint documents) are as important as the products themselves. Only if the documents are living—that is, only if they truly guide the day-to-day operation of the stakeholders in the school—are they worthwhile. Thus, stakeholders must believe in these blueprints and share in their development if they are to be most passionate and enthusiastic about their roles in implementing them. The organization’s blueprints are the processes and products essential to channeling the direction and energy of the various constituencies in schools, often characterized as loosely coupled organizations, inclined not to be well-centered or purposefully unified.

Chapter 4 is the superglue of a leader’s toolbox. It provides insight into ensuring that the school’s culture is positive, and centered on teaching and learning. The importance of and how to assess school climate and culture, the behaviors and skills most essential for creating and maintaining a positive school culture, and the importance of moving a school from a collection of classrooms and cubby holes, parents, and community members to school as a learning community are included in this chapter.

Chapter 5 adds the vital tool—communication conduits—to the principal’s toolbox. Strategies for improving the school’s communication include the importance of listening and understanding, facilitating dialogue and collaboration among the various school stakeholders, and connecting the school and educators with parents and community members as true partners in the village’s shared enterprise of educating its young people.

Chapter 6 offers the leader a humble metaphor for powerful tools—whetstones for ensuring best practices from professional educators in the form of reflective practice, supportive supervision, and cooperative evaluation. These practices are key to professional educators’ and schools’ continued improvement. As healthy and sane as they may seem, these approaches to very fundamental leadership functions require a major shift in thinking about the roles and responsibilities of today’s teacher and principal.

Chapter 7’s tool, the instructional leadership lens, is to the principal what safety goggles are to the carpenter. It protects the leader from having his or her vision blurred or damaged by political and other extraneous debris. Using the research-based, learner-centered principles as the reliable lens for making decisions and guiding one’s work facilitates leaders by keeping them focused and free from the barrage of distracters to clear-headed, student-centered thinking.

Chapter 8 contains the tools of accountability—tape measures, plumb lines, and common sense. For the principal, these tools are thoroughly understanding accountability issues; appropriately using well-designed standards to facilitate school improvement; and focusing on the classroom as the centerpiece for finding out just how well students are performing.

Chapter 9 adds the muscle tool to the leader’s toolbox, the power saw of cutting-edge strategies, which include the important concept of proactive leadership, wherein school leaders make change work for, rather than impede, school improvement; the various processes for dealing responsibly and most productively with data to improve teaching and learning; and the power of technology to transform schools with large populations of students who are at risk of failing into learning communities where all adults and children are most likely to succeed.

Chapter 10 brings us full circle to focusing once again, as we did in the early chapters, on the leader as an individual, rounding out the points in Chapters 1 and 2, which deal with the importance of a principal’s self-understanding and thorough examination of his or her beliefs and values, awareness of the standards and professional requirements of today’s school leaders, and analysis of his or her strengths and weaknesses in light of those expectations. This chapter brings closure to the text by emphasizing the significance of attending to personal fitness, the undeniably ultimate tool for peak performance: physical stamina, intellectual prowess, social and emotional stability, and spiritual bounty. Sustained neglect in any of these facets of our humanity eventually leads to deficits that take their toll on other dimensions of our lives. Overemphasis on one area does not compensate for deficits in another. Balance is the key. Personal and professional lives are not lived separately; each impacts the other, for better or for worse. Achieving balance across all areas of our lives is challenging, but the better we manage this, the more wholesomely productive we become, at work and at home.

This handbook for principals has much flexibility for individuals to put their own spin on leadership. Oversimplification of the complex work of leadership by reducing the content to recipes or formulas for success is avoided. Instead, readers are encouraged throughout the book to reflect on various sets of questions that can help a principal find direction most fitting to the situation and the school context. The text's tools are cognitive and work best for the reader who is reflective and sensitive to how the tools can best facilitate school improvement in one's particular situation. Good tools in the hands of a thoughtful, dedicated craftsperson are merely facilitators of the person's drive and passion to improve and to excel at leadership. My hope is that this book finds its way to those educators who have the stamina, ambition, intelligence, and disposition to want the best for our schools and our children, and that it helps them in finding their own way and achieving their dreams and mine for all students to grow up healthy, happy, and well educated. After eight years of focusing on "no child left behind," it seems a far more noble goal for the country to redirect its attention to ensuring that *no child's potential go untapped, unnoticed, under-nurtured or, worse yet, stifled* during his or her formative, developmental years. America's greatest achievement yet would be our ability to help each child be all that he or she can possibly be. My very best wishes to you as you seek to maximize your own potential in our mutual pursuit of making America's schools and the world a better place by investing our very best in children.