
Series Introduction

The American Association of School Administrators (AASA) is the largest association in the world representing school system leaders and, in particular, school district superintendents. These educational leaders know that the quality of America's schools depends heavily on the ability of school principals. AASA recognizes a pressing need exists to improve the skills and knowledge of current and prospective school leaders. To help address this need, AASA has put in place the Leadership for Learning initiative. This series of books plays a central role in this initiative.

The Leadership for Learning books address a broad range of knowledge and skills school superintendents, exceptional principals, and researchers believe are essential to ensure effective leadership at the school level. The content of this series of books reflects the "leaders' standards" developed for state licensure by the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC), which is composed of representatives from several professional organizations representing educators, policymakers, and scholars. These standards have been adopted by more than two thirds of the states as the criteria by which the qualifications of school principals should be judged. Although the books in the series can be thought of as parts of a coherent curriculum, individual books stand on their own as syntheses of relevant research and expert consensus about best practice. The series as a whole reflects these commitments:

- All students should have the opportunity to maximize their potential for intellectual and social development.
- Enhancing the quality of teaching is the most important way to influence students' opportunities to learn.

- The actions of administrators, teachers, and school staff should be based on collaborative problem solving focused on the systematic analysis of student performance and evidence of effective practice.
- School leaders need to foster the active engagement of parents and community organizations in the direct facilitation of student learning.

Never before has it been as important for school leaders to communicate effectively with their stakeholders—including students, teachers, families, community leaders and the public. This is not a matter of selling the message or gaining political support or heading off opposition. Indeed, if these goals shape the communication strategy of a school, it is almost certainly going to be ineffective—if not counter-productive.

Drawing on research on private, as well as public, organizations, and drawing on decades of experience, E. Joseph Schneider provides school leaders with ways of thinking and acting strategically to build partnerships that will enhance the contributions schools can make to student learning.

The strategic approach to “communication management” that Schneider describes recognizes that schools cannot do their job without both the support of families and others that influence student learning and the ideas and information they can provide. The “management” of communications is essential because there is a great deal of information to which the schools’ stakeholders have access and they have limited time and interest in sorting out what they really need to know and what they have learned that is not true or otherwise misleading.

But managing communication does not mean manipulating information. It means carefully planning to inform and to learn from stakeholders in the school's effectiveness in order to ensure that all children learn at high levels. Chester Barnard, said by some to be one of the pioneers of thinking about organizations, argued in 1938 that businesses need to think about those on whom the success of the company depends (e.g., clients) as members of the organization. In successful organizations, members need to be well informed, have the capacity to understand one another, trust that what they are learning is truthful, and know what their ideas are sought and respected. That understanding guides the strategic approach to communication advocated in this unique book.

—Willis D. Hawley
Series Editor