
The Learning Leader

How to Focus School Improvement for Better Results

Preface: A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to <i>The Learning Leader</i>	vii
Introduction: What <i>The Learning Leader</i> Will Do for You	xvii
1. The Results Paradox	1
2. Challenging Leadership Myths: Hope for the Exhausted Leader	9
3. Architectural Leadership: Why You Cannot Do It Alone	24
4. The Dimensions of Leadership	32
5. What Matters Most: From Planning to Performance	61
6. Transforming Research into Action	80
7. Leadership and Effective Feedback: The Dilemmas of Grading	113
8. Using Leadership Maps to Improve Your School	132
9. Putting It All Together: The Essential Transformations of the Learning Leader	158
Appendix A: Planning, Implementation, and Monitoring (PIM) School Improvement Audit and Scoring Guide	182
Appendix B: Creating Your Leadership Map	192
Appendix C: Guidelines for Data Walls or the Science Fair for Grownups	196
Appendix D: Daily Priorities Lists	200
Acknowledgments	203
References	206
Index	212
About the Author	220

The Leadership for Learning Framework

The practical alternative that addresses both the results paradox and the limitations of analytical intelligence is the Leadership for Learning Framework. My initial conception of this framework (Reeves, 2002a) suggested the four quadrants displayed in Figure 1.1. The vertical axis reflects results, typically measured in the educational context as student test scores. The horizontal axis displays the leader’s understanding of the “Antecedents of Excellence,” those measurable indicators of leadership, teaching practices, curriculum, parental involvement, and other factors that influence results. As the matrix suggests in the upper left corner, if there are high results are

1.1 — The Leadership for Learning Framework

Achievement of Results	Lucky High results, low understanding of antecedents Replication of success unlikely	Leading High results, high understanding of antecedents Replication of success likely
	Losing Low results, low understanding of antecedents Replication of failure likely	Learning Low results, high understanding of antecedents Replication of success likely
	Antecedents of Excellence	

accompanied by low understanding of the antecedents of excellence, the leader is not good but merely lucky. Such results are unlikely to be replicated. If the results are low and the antecedents of excellence are poorly understood, then we are doomed to a losing cycle of repeating the same actions and expecting different results. This quadrant of the matrix describes innumerable schools and entire systems where leaders will jump on every bandwagon and pursue every fad, but steadfastly refuse to make fundamental changes in scheduling, assessment, grading, personnel assignments, and leadership practices. They will change everything except, of course, those things that matter most for the results they want.

The focus of this book is the right side of the matrix, the Leading and Learning quadrants. In the lower right quadrant, the “Learner” has not yet achieved desired results but nevertheless possesses deep insights into the antecedents of excellence. This is the leader who will look and dig deeply into the data, rather than blaming the students or expressing bewilderment like the “Loser.” While the Loser says, “It beats me—it must be the kids,” the Learner says this:

I’ve analyzed the data deeply, and here are my preliminary conclusions. First, although our average scores are disappointing, I’ve noticed that we have exceptional success in some isolated areas. Mr. Jasper’s 4th graders excel in geometry, and Ms. Fitch’s 2nd graders made enormous gains in vocabulary. I’ve conducted some extensive observations of both their classes and noted that they are engaging in some remarkably different teaching and classroom assessment practices. Our collective challenge is to conduct a treasure hunt and find other pockets of excellence and then determine how we can identify, document, and replicate these practices.



Using Leadership Maps to Improve Your School

The Leadership for Learning Framework Revisited

This book began with the Leadership for Learning Framework in which the reader was challenged to consider that student achievement is more than a set of test scores (see Figure 8.1). By exclusively focusing on results, leaders and teachers fail to measure and understand the importance of their own actions. High results, the matrix reveals, might be the effect of successful leadership and teaching, or the same results might be luck. Only by evaluating both causes and effects in a comprehensive accountability system can leaders, teachers, and policymakers understand the complexities of student achievement and the efficacy of teaching and leadership practices.

In my travels to schools around the world, I find that many teachers and leaders are already using this framework in a general way. They will come up to me and say, “We’re really challenging ourselves, because we don’t know if we’re as good as we thought we were.

Perhaps we're in the Lucky quadrant." Others will say, "We're not very happy with our scores, but at least we're in the Learning quadrant." A few confess, "We just don't seem to be making any of the necessary changes—we're stuck in the Losing quadrant." Unfortunately, labeling a condition is helpful only if we can follow up that work with interpretation of the data and application of the research in a meaningful way that will lead not only to improved professional practices but to improved student achievement. Leadership mapping is a tool that will allow you to use research data and your own student accountability data in a constructive manner so that you can literally watch your map as it changes over time, create strategies to respond to the inferences from your map, and, most importantly, use those inferences from national research and your own data to implement effective change.

8.1 — The Leadership for Learning Framework

