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Chapter 1

Whetting Your Appetite— The Menu, Please!



“The best teacher is the one who NEVER forgets
what it is like to be a student.
The best administrator is the one who NEVER forgets
what it is like to be a teacher.”
—Neila A. Connors



Let’s begin with a reality—this book is not research-based, focused on results of surveys, or theoretically driven. The information is based on observations, discussions, personal learning experiences, shadowing, and “good ol’ common sense.” Like Frank Sinatra, “I did it MY WAY.”

Consequently, if you are extremely left-brained and searching for statistics, micro-management strategies, or in-depth research studies to validate the forthcoming information, this book is NOT for you. On the other hand, if you are looking for some basic and practical ways to be an outstanding administrator, with “FUN” sprinkled throughout, read on. I hope you enjoy the “dining experience.” Bon Appétit!

WHY DID I WRITE THIS BOOK?

Education is a serious business that requires every grain of “being” from individuals who want to invest in making a difference for students. It demands a serious commitment from people willing to go above and beyond the call of duty. Being an educator during these times is not easy. Why?



Plainly, educators are expected to deal with all of the issues and baggage children bring from their homes into learning settings. Children enter school doors every day either having just left a healthy, happy home where adults truly recognize the importance of a good education and raising self-directed children or having just left an empty house filled with empty promises and an empty refrigerator. On a daily basis, all walks of life arrive at school hoping they will be safe, fed, and assisted in realizing dreams. As Eleanor Roosevelt said, "The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams."

Educators can make or break a child's day and ultimately impact their future. The power of a teacher is ongoing—whether it is positive or negative. Thus is the business of education. We must continually work together to recognize that we truly do touch the future—we teach. A difference is made when an individual teacher closes his/her door and connects with students. Consequently, to ensure that teachers are supportive of all students, we must create professional, safe, secure, and encouraging environments where everyone feels appreciated, listened to, and respected. Hence, the role of the administrator is the crucial element in determining the morale and climate of any given school.

So, why did I write this book? As someone, who spends an extraordinary amount of time in schools working with administrators and teachers, I saw a need for reflection. Through my personal experiences, I can irrefutably state that successful schools only survive when there are successful administrators leading the way. As simplistic as this may seem, effective schools exist and persevere only when an exceptional leader with a vision is the "head cook." Too often, the demise of a celebrated school occurs when a mediocre leader, who does not have the fire in her/his belly or passion to continue forging ahead, replaces a talented leader.

Successful administrators FEED their teachers continuously to make sure the students ARE NOT EATEN. Meaning, the best leaders focus on



providing a climate where teachers are encouraged to take risks and act as coaches—guiding students through journeys of success. Effective leaders ask, guide, delegate, communicate, encourage, and take risks. They make it abundantly clear that the people in the building are important, and they'll do whatever it takes to say thank you for winning efforts.

I am continually impressed with outstanding teachers. Those teachers who have “overloaded plates,” are minimally recognized or appreciated for their efforts. The student advocates who are sometimes forced to focus on a test-driven curriculum rather than a skills/process based curriculum are the real heroes. Consequently, I wanted to share some ways administrators can applaud and support these great teachers. I agree with my friend and mentor, Jim Garvin, who shares, “Teachers are the GOLD-COLLAR workers of the universe.” If the information shared herein helps one administrator become a more positive, teacher-focused leader, I will be satisfied. In the meantime, here’s a toast to all of those administrators who already effectively feed their teachers. You are the champions and the reason successful schools form the foundation of our society.

WHO NEEDS TO READ THIS BOOK?

Primarily, this book is for anyone who agrees that teaching is the most important profession there is. It needs to be read by individuals who recognize that teaching is difficult and teachers need continual appreciative acts. Whenever we can provide positive experiences to promote teachers and their efforts, we are on a winning track. This book is for all grade levels, all genders, all types of leaders, and all geographic locations. Most importantly, it is for anyone wanting to make a difference.

Secondly, it would help if the readers were well-adjusted leaders and in positions to implement the suggestions. Obviously, the more self-worth one has, the more likely she/he is to reflect, analyze, and determine how to improve. Who is well-adjusted?



The defining characteristics of a well-adjusted leader include:

- **THE ABILITY TO CARE AND BE CONCERNED FOR OTHERS**

Before anyone can make a difference they must care. The best schools are based on the premise that no one cares how much you know until they know how much you care. The leader of a school is instrumental in defining, developing, and designing a climate of care. From the moment you walk in the front door of a school, symbols of care must be prevalent throughout. It is the people, practices, positives, and performances that characterize the “caring-ness” of a school. An effective leader serves as the CARE police.

- **THE DESIRE TO BE SUCCESSFUL**

Success is defined as a “favorable outcome or result.” Effective leaders are persistently in search of ways to improve, grow, and strengthen. Success begets success. Consequently, in surroundings where leaders are focused on pleasant results, outcomes are frequently rewarding to all. The best leaders walk the talk of success.

- **THE ABILITY TO HANDLE STRESS**

There is only one group of people who do not have stress in their lives and they are no longer on the planet. Stress is an element of life and it depends on how one handles this stress that makes or breaks a situation. Successful leaders respond to stress rather than react to it. They also include many stress-relievers in their communications. Chapter six will discuss handling stress in more detail.

- **A GENERAL FEELING OF GOOD HEALTH**

A healthy person is a happy person. Anyone who decides to take on a leadership position must realize the importance of good health. Our health is like sleep—we don’t miss it until we are deprived of it. Valuable leaders recognize the importance of cherishing the mind, body, and spirit.