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Introduction: Why Emotional Intelligence?

Of the many skills required for successful school leadership in the 21st century, none is more important than the ability to put together a team of committed and collaborative staff who hold a common vision. Developing and maintaining a cohesive team with a relentless focus on student learning is a daunting task. To cultivate a culture that is always challenging the status quo and where excellence is the expectation, school leaders will need to learn, develop and demonstrate high levels of emotional intelligence. Michael Fullan (2001), a leading authority on educational leadership, indicates the success of 21st-century school leaders will increasingly depend on establishing successful relationships, leading change, and dealing with emotions in turbulent times.

Effective leaders will need to transform schools into autonomous, professional learning communities that embrace change and create high-performing learning environments for students and teachers (Moore, 2007). Many educational researchers cite the importance of handling emotions for the leaders of such reforms (Fullan, 2001). Emotional Intelligence (EI) is an individual's ability to perceive emotion in self and others, understand it, and then manage it (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). A high level of emotional intelligence is an essential component of effective leadership (George, 2000). Studying emotional intelligence provides school leaders with the information and awareness necessary to guide staffs as they develop a common vision for their schools, maintain their focus on achievement for all students, and create a school culture of trust and respect. According to a study of a number of companies, EI was twice as important as cognitive ability in predicting outstanding employee performance, and accounted for more than 85 per cent of star performance in top leaders (Hay Group, 1999). And the good news is, emotional intelligence can be developed and improved!

The professional learning community and emotional intelligence

No recent reform initiative has led to more significant school improvement than the creation of professional learning communities (PLC). The two biggest obstacles in turning a school into a PLC have been 1) school leaders' focusing on terminology and perceptions rather than "practices" (Dufour, 2007), and 2) the inability of school leaders to deal effectively with emotions during the implementation process (Moore, 2007). While there have been a number of informative books about creating a PLC in schools (Dufour, 2007; Blankstein, 2008), there has been little to support educators in recognising, assessing, developing or improving their levels of emotional intelligence.

Educators naturally feel somewhat anxious, even overwhelmed, when they initiate a major school reform. Sarason, as cited in Dufour & Eaker (2009), stated, "the turmoil associated with school reform cannot be avoided, and how well it is coped with separates the boys from the men and the girls from the women" (p. 49). While school leaders often experience anxiety and stress that lead to role strain (Bredeson, 1993), it is also normal for their teachers to experience anxiety and frustration during the stages of implementation. This is not a reflection of poor leadership, but a necessary and unavoidable reality. I cannot recall the number of conversations I have had during the last several years with administrators who have advised that a school leader cannot wait for 100 per cent, 75 per cent, or even less buy-in to initiate some of the changes crucial for school success. To a person, these leaders believed that had they waited for a very high level of buy-in before implementing change, anxiety and churning would still have occurred. Wheatley (1999) wrote in *Leadership and the New Science*:

Once I understood the nature of the work, it helped me relax and be more generous. I learned that people get frightened if asked to change their worldview: And why wouldn't they? Of course people will get defensive; of course they might be intrigued by a new idea, but then turn away in fear. They are smart enough to realise how much they would have to change if they accepted that idea. (p.176)

Heifetz and Linsky (2002) believe successful leaders must learn to "address emotional as well as conceptual work" (p.116). Senge (1990) shared the view of one CEO who believed it was unfortunate that leaders pursued physical and intellectual development over emotional development, as emotional capacities may be more

important in reaching one's fullest potential. In this book I hope to help you understand the major part that developing your emotional capacities has to play in reaching your fullest potential.

Sala (2001) reported that as soon as many businesses and organisations learned the value of emotional intelligence, many emotional intelligence programs emerged as part of leadership training and identification programs. Boyatzis said that these programs were designed to (a) educate people about emotional intelligence, (b) evaluate their strengths and weaknesses, and (c) develop and enhance their ability to display greater emotional intelligence (as cited in Sala, 2001).

Components of the program

This book provides a program that explains why improving your emotional intelligence will make you a better leader and how to go about it. The program includes a combination of case studies, my experiences as an emotional intelligence and school administrator coach, and emotional intelligence self-assessment and staff assessment instruments developed by Genos, an international company led by large experienced researchers.

Many emotional intelligence assessments and coaching programs adopted by companies and other business executives cost hundreds of dollars. Unfortunately, few schools are ever provided such resources for training, identifying and developing their leaders. This resource, however, will help school leaders identify their strengths and provide opportunities for them to develop their emotional intelligence without having to spend thousands of dollars.

The book's case studies, both genuine and adapted, examine challenges that are often emotionally charged and are faced by school leaders on a daily basis. The case studies allow you to gain valuable and wide-ranging experiences without having to be personally involved with the associated conflict. Through the case studies you will acquire insight into your own emotional intelligence as you learn from Rick, principal of a high-achieving school, who fails to get a position for which he felt ready and qualified; from Pete, assistant principal and athletic director, husband and father, as he encounters trust issues, challenges to his decisions, and stress from meshing multiple roles; and from Paula, a principal, as she strives to be persuasive but not aggressive and to treat superiors and staff alike. Analyses of these and other case studies combined with suggestions for improving your own emotional intelligence are all included here.