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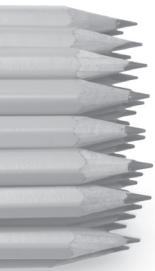
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INTRODUCTION

Beginning Thoughts

No one can lead alone. After all, an educational leader's day can easily include a student missing the bus, an accident occurring in the pick-up lane, a teacher calling in sick, the cafeteria running out of cereal, and a bathroom pipe leaking—all in the first thirty minutes of the day and having nothing to do with learning. The responsibilities are too much for a single individual, with expectations of proficiency not only in management but also in pedagogy, instruction, assessment, curriculum, technology, research, staff evaluation processes, data analysis, and more. When you add making sure teachers have what they need and ensuring that students show academic growth, you can easily see that leadership is not a one-person job. It requires collaboration. But there is a way to protect sanity, strengthen organizations, and increase success: leading collaboratively.

Collaborative leadership requires someone to recognize and utilize the strengths of many people toward a single goal or vision. A collaborative leader fosters leadership skills in others and empowers them to be responsive to an organization's needs. It is not enough to understand the required work and accomplish the goals that are tied to that work. After all, great leaders do not lead tasks; great leaders lead people. Working in tandem with and promoting leadership in colleagues not only supports an organization but also facilitates goal achievement. Richard DuFour (2015) offers this blunt but true message: "No one person has the energy, expertise, and influence to fulfill all the responsibilities of your job successfully. If you try to do it all by yourself, you will fail" (p. 225). To wit, author Linda Lambert (1998) states that "when we equate the powerful concept of leadership with the behaviors of one person, we are limiting the achievement of broad-based participation by a community or a society" (p. 5). A broader leadership community makes the difference.

The following sections in this introduction define collaborative leadership, this book's audience and framework, and our hopes for you, the reader.

EXAMINING YOUR CURRENT REALITY

As you read this chapter, consider the following questions. Reflect on your personal growth as a leader and your support of growing leadership within your organization.

- How do you feel at the end of the day?
- What does your to-do list look like?
- Who supports you, and how do they provide that support?
- In what ways does that support improve your school's educational environment?
- How do you support those around you?
- How does that support grow others' leadership skills?

Collaborative Leadership

Collaborative leadership is about capitalizing on the strengths and skills of others in the effort to achieve common goals. It is understanding that success is achieved through sharing leadership responsibility. While *collaboration* is people working together, *collaborative leadership* is about encouraging others to be leaders as well.

Collaborative leadership incorporates various approaches and tools. These types of leaders strive to know themselves as leaders and endeavor to know others within the organization, establishing rapport that eventually leads to trust. Trust is crucial to collaboration, since “psychological safety, more than anything else, [is] critical to making a team work” (Duhigg, 2016). Collaborative leaders intentionally bring out others’ strengths and potentials and use visioning to allow for greater autonomy. Tim Kanold (2011) encourages leaders to “paint that picture and let everyone touch the brush” (p. 31). Communication is a way to connect the people and the work. Author and motivational speaker Marcus Buckingham (2005) speaks to the necessity of leaders communicating clearly to connect an organization’s purpose with the actions of those who live within to ensure progress.

Leaders use their knowledge of others to identify who should lead teams. After doing so, they relinquish authority to a broader group but continue providing support, thus enabling additional leaders to grow. They help their teams stay focused and working toward their shared vision. Director of qualitative research for the

Education Leadership Research Center at Texas A&M University, Jean Madsen (1996), says it precisely:

In these communal settings, leadership is not defined as exercising power over others but as empowering people to accomplish shared goals. The open exercise of wit and will, principle and passion, time and talent, and purpose and power allow these varied participants to accomplish a set of goals. (p. 79)

This collaborative leadership allows everyone to use his or her personal strengths. Leadership authors Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner (2012) talk about this as creating a climate that promotes people being at their best. The two go on to share that, “in a climate of competence and confidence, people don’t hesitate to hold themselves personally accountable for results, and they feel profound ownership for their achievements” (p. 243). People feel empowered to do what needs to be done when leaders enable this approach. Communities author Peter Block’s (2013) words hold true: “Empowerment embodies the belief that the answer to the latest crisis lies within each of us” (p. 19).

Effective leaders first provide direction and then shift their energy to serve those who can get the job done. After providing direction, these leaders identify and meet the needs of the team with resources and tools (Hunter, 2004) and the needs of its individual members (acknowledging that people have their own fears, joys, and sensitivities). Richard DuFour, Rebecca DuFour, Robert Eaker, Thomas Many, and Mike Mattos (2016) refer to this group as a *guiding coalition*. They are a conduit for all other teams. Many schools simply call this a *leadership team*. What you call the teams is not as important as ensuring alignment between the leader and the teams’ actions.

This Book’s Audience

This book is written by educators, for educators. With almost fifty years of combined education experience in over thirty states (including our own settings), we have worked with many leaders from multiple levels. We have seen many leadership styles. We have seen leaders move from shaky ground to solid. One consistency is that when you know how to promote leadership in others, you accomplish amazing things. Anyone in an educational leadership position, from teacher leaders to those at the central office level, or anyone who desires such a position, can use this book to learn about and develop skills such as earning trust, visioning, and communicating, which are crucial to collaborative leadership.

Whether you aspire to leadership or have already spent years in a leadership position, this book can help. For those new to leadership, the reflection questions can

hone your thoughts and strengthen your approaches. Experienced leaders know that finding new ideas and tools is worthwhile. Like a good collaborative leader, this book works with you and provides the information and resources you need to promote positive organizational growth.

This Book's Framework

Each chapter title is a common collaborative leadership question, and the chapter contents explore each question in turn. In our look at collaborative leadership, we began with an internal approach—look at yourself as a leader first. Chapter 1 asks you to think about your leadership skills, and the action steps help you increase those skills. Building trust from others is one of the most necessary skills. Chapter 2 reveals the need for building trust when leading others collaboratively and offers steps for doing just that. After you build trust, it is time to build a team of leaders. Chapter 3 helps you build efficacious teams of other collaborative leaders. Ensuring that everyone on the team is on the same page and using that to promote growth occur when they develop a common vision. Chapter 4 helps you create a vision in a way that promotes shared beliefs. The vision not only provides direction but also helps define the work you need to accomplish. Chapter 5 helps you guide the work that occurs in a collaboratively led educational environment. It is easy to get immersed in the work and stop seeing the bigger picture. Chapter 6 focuses on what, when, and how to communicate regarding the work and the resulting success. The book's epilogue brings home what we hope you've learned as you read.

Each chapter explores an aspect stemming from our work with administrators, superintendents, and teacher leaders in a variety of K–12 educational settings. The goal is to provide deeper understanding, strategies, and tools to support leaders who are working to grow other leaders. In hopes that you can examine your daily practices and compare them with what you learn as you read the book, we begin every chapter with several questions, prompting you to examine your current reality around leadership.

To help you think about possible changes, we conclude each chapter with action steps and reproducibles. We offer additional action steps there for creating and attaining goals and leading the right work. Because one of the best ways to move forward is to recognize individual staff members' and the whole school's accomplishments and progress, we also include a celebration idea or strategy in each chapter. You can implement these steps and tools as-is, or adjust them to fit your current reality.

In each chapter, we propose the following questions.

- What are you doing right now that fits with what you learned from reading this chapter?
- What might you stop doing after reading this chapter?
- What might you start doing after reading this chapter?

Reflect on the questions in light of each chapter's topic.

Our Hopes for You

Rather than stalling out on theory, we want to push your collaborative leadership efforts forward. We want to move your leadership thinking from isolation to collaboration, with the goals of increasing your collaborative leadership efficacy so that student achievement increases. You want results that show student growth. If the end result is to improve and increase student learning, then your challenge is to figure out how to encourage and support those who are responsible for getting it done. This book helps you meet that challenge by guiding you on the aspects of leading collaboratively and providing tools that help you grow as a leader.

We hope that regardless of where you currently are, reading this book will help you increase your understanding. You can connect what you learn from the book with the way you practice leadership. Chances are you already have some sort of leadership team in place. Do you know and understand members' strengths? Are you using them to reach team goals? If not, challenge yourself to expand your leadership abilities. What should you do first? Have you built the necessary trust? Do you have a common vision? You can choose new ways to look at leadership and new skills to practice. Finally, you can watch the impact your learning has on others. Is greater growth occurring? (We have included many reproducibles you can use to see various aspects of growth.) If so, you are a collaborative leader who is creating a successful learning environment that will profoundly benefit the staff, the community, and most important, the students.