

HORACE

Essential Leadership in the School Change Process

What does it take to lead people through school change? Who can do it, and how? What responsibilities fall to school leaders in pressing the conversation about hard issues, creating a sense of urgency, yet not discouraging those for whom change means loss, risk, and uncertainty?

WHAT WAS THE BEST WAY TO serve the needs of the Spanish-speaking students at Tombaugh Elementary School in Las Cruces, New Mexico? State and federal policies on bilingual education had them clustered in special classes to an extent that, despite the school's best efforts, came perilously close to tracking. And though Tombaugh's teachers and its principal were troubled by such grouping, existing regulations and the shortage of qualified bilingual staff made it seem an intractable dilemma.

But when a committee from New Mexico's Elementary Network Center for Essential Schools pinpointed the problem as a "reflective question" for Tombaugh to consider in its application for Coalition membership, principal Chris Milyard agreed. "We had already focused our school portfolio around meeting the needs of our diverse population," she says. "Teachers wanted to come up with another solution."

Prompted by the committee's question, the Tombaugh faculty tried out a new plan. These days, multi-age language classes allow more regular teachers to work directly with Spanish-speaking students. And bilingual teacher Emma Castañeda has written a proposal to share Tombaugh's new practices with schools district-wide.

The case stands as a striking symbol of collective leadership at every level of Essential schooling.

By paying close attention to classroom practices in its membership application process, the New Mexico Center exercised the advantages of the new, decentralized Coalition, in which regional Centers serve key leadership roles. By assembling a thoughtful school portfolio that included "essential questions" about its own work, Tombaugh's principal and teachers began to test their practices against their guiding vision. By involving the whole faculty in finding a solution, the school gained critical support for the changes that would follow. And by offering its plan as an example to the district, Tombaugh showed how teacher-generated analysis and action can affect the larger system.

Who Leads, and Why?

As schools experience new pressures from every quarter, the challenges of leading them toward meaningful improvement have never loomed larger. Once, a school leader was invariably its principal, expected to maintain a status quo that looked backward, conserving and perpetuating a stable knowledge base for use by society's elite. Now, we ask schools to educate a much broader population for a swiftly changing global society with a ballooning information base.

At the same time, the current national rhetoric of reform has raised the stakes dramatically for schools. Comparisons of standardized test scores drive rewards and

sanctions that often penalize schools with the least advantaged students. Without the right bottom line, little recognition goes even to those that have substantially raised the achievement levels of students who entered desperately far behind. Morale suffers so seriously in such a climate that dedicated school people often give up the effort and go back to practices designed for a past era.

As Essential schools face the task of reconstructing their entire institutional culture, the principal still acts as the fulcrum of school leadership. But given these daunting new circumstances, schools now need every leader they can get.

"Constructing" Change

In situations of school change, "leadership" must come to mean not the actions one person takes for or with other people, says Linda Lambert of the Center for Educational Leadership at California State University in Hayward. Instead, it should refer to "the reciprocal processes that enable participants in an educational community to construct meanings that lead toward a common purpose of schooling." Her "constructivist" theory asks school leaders to look to "a set of untapped opportunities . . . within the culture of the school; . . . the individual minds of educators in the school community, the minds of others in that community, and the richness of ideas and questions yet unexplored or unasked among us."

Julio Feldman found out the usefulness of this approach when, after eight years leading Philadelphia's McClure Elementary School toward putting the Coalition's Nine Common Principles into action, he was selected by the local school council of nearby Central East Middle School as its new principal. "In my first school, I saw my job as helping teachers adopt a new vision of curriculum, instruction, and shared governance," he observes. In contrast, Central East had begun only five years before with a strong common vision; and unlike in most city schools, most of

its faculty had chosen to teach there.

"At an early council meeting I just assumed I was supposed to set the agenda and run the meeting," Feldman recalls. "Very politely the group set me straight. These people knew how to use their own strengths; they were not waiting for the new principal."

At the same time, Feldman notes, the fact that the school council had selected him made his job as instructional leader easier. "We have a lot of people through whose efforts the school is what it is," he says. "I just have to find my place as part of that work. Sometimes I think twice before I give an opinion or suggest we do something. Is that my role, I ask, or is it the role of the group?"

Such mutual and dynamic leadership does not mean the leader abdicates, however. "Getting all voices heard requires strong leadership," says Nancy Mohr, for ten years the principal of University Heights High School in the Bronx, New York. "Every group needs someone to collect its voice, accurately gauge its needs, and hold it to agreed-upon procedures and structures." Those structures, she suggests, might include these norms:

- The group brings wisdom and knowledge to the table; building on that is our work. The more diverse the group, the more wisdom and knowledge are available.
- As group members, we learn more by reflecting on our own learning than by concentrating on getting others to change their ideas.
- Until we have reason to trust and respect each other, we must *act as if* we trust and respect each other.

Whose School Is It?

Many of the more successful Essential schools show high levels of teacher, student, parent, and community participation in key leadership roles. Students at Vanguard High School in New York City, for instance, suggested that the school community develop contracts naming the mutual expectations

among students, teachers, and the community.

"This was a pretty new discussion for us," says principal Louis Delgado. "We started to think more about paying attention to what the kids want and where they're at. When teachers try this, they do experience a fear of losing control."

As a leader, Delgado notes, he is learning to begin where teachers are, not just kids. "Empowering teachers is a struggle," he says. "It takes a long time, so the temptation is to make decisions yourself. But if you don't, you gain more than you lose."

When change issues threaten various interests, the experienced leader often turns to good marketing and communication techniques to help schools work them through, points out Phillip Schlechty, who heads the Center for Leadership in School Reform in Louisville, Kentucky.

"Effective change leaders are adept at framing problems in ways that connect to the different audi-



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ences being addressed without compromising the integrity of the change itself," he says. "Inexperienced teachers view changes differently than do older, more experienced teachers. High school principals generally have a world view different from elementary principals. What parents expect of schools is likely to differ from what business leaders want, and parents will be concerned about aspects of a change process that will be of no concern at all to senior citizens."

Sometimes reframing a problem will also render it more manageable, Schlechty notes. For example, a worry about class size might actually reflect concern that teachers do not have time to give students enough individual attention. "If teachers were encouraged to consider new ways to use time, organize space, employ technology, and organize and deploy children and adults," Schlechty says, "they might invent solutions to the time and attention problem that would be much more satisfying than reducing class size."

Training a new lens on an old problem also can yield surprising results. When ninth- and tenth-grade teachers at San Diego's Hoover High School decided to plan and teach together around shared exhibitions, a fascinating clash emerged about heterogeneous grouping that went, principal Doris Alvarez recalls, to the very purposes of schooling. "If the math students were 'ability grouped' as many math teachers preferred," she says, "we ended up with de facto tracking in the humanities as well."

On their own steam, teaching teams called in two math and science consultants from the nearby University of California campus to advise them. "Our math teachers ended up deciding to pull students out for extra help rather than putting them in a lower-achieving class," Alvarez says. "At least for that year, they came to a good solution for everyone."

Finding common ground among differing parties can also serve as a bridge toward change. Hoover staff

Reframing Organizational Change

Leaders tend to act in different "frames" that reflect their personal styles and that focus on different aspects of any particular problem, suggest Lee Bolman and Terrence Deal, who have written widely about organizational change. Some are especially sensitive to the needs of people in the organization and gravitate toward human resources. Some see structure as the key to most problems and use analysis and design as a primary tool to solving them. Some are primarily political, advocating certain actions, negotiating, and building coalitions. And some are prophets or poets, using symbolism to inspire people and frame experiences.

When change puts stress on organizations, leaders might act in different ways depending on which of these frames they typically use. Ideally, the leader can combine different frames into a more comprehensive and powerful style—or can reach out to work in teams with people in the organization who possess complementary strengths.

Human Resource: Change causes people to feel incompetent, needy, and powerless. Developing new skills, creating opportunities for involvement, and providing psychological support are essential.

Structural: Change alters the clarity and stability of roles and relationships, creating confusion and chaos. This requires attention to realigning and renegotiating formal patterns and policies.

Political: Change generates conflicts and creates new winners and losers. Avoiding or smoothing over those issues drives conflict underground. Managing change effectively requires the creation of arenas where issues can be negotiated.

Symbolic: Change creates loss of meaning and purpose. People form attachments to symbols and symbolic activity. When the attachments are severed, they experience difficulty in letting go. Existential wounds require symbolic healing.

From Lee G. Bolman and Terrence Deal, Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice, and Leadership. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991.

discovered, for instance, that 30 percent of their students were receiving their only health services from the school nurse. Together with community agencies, they raised funds for a school-based clinic with free medical and social services. Despite strong parental involvement, however, not everybody agreed on the details. "We had quite a time," Alvarez says, "getting parents to agree on whether students could obtain contraceptives through the clinic."

"It came down to a question of 'Whose school is this?'" she says. "In the end they decided against the contraceptives. But we got a great new clinic with tremendous support from the community. It's an outcome we can live with for now. You have to sense when to nudge and when to stay back."

A Culture of Conversation

Schools will never regain the energy of teaching and learning, argues Ernesto Cortez of the Texas Interfaith Education Fund, unless they can get the non-parent community to care about children in just such ways. "It doesn't work for the school to change itself," he declared at the CES 1996 Fall Forum in Albuquerque, New Mexico. "We have to recreate our social fabric, by activating every party's stake in our culture."

A MacArthur Fellow, Cortez has made his name by organizing communities to think together about the hard questions that confront them. "We have to replace our habit of command and control," he says, "with a culture of conversation. That means creating a context where people can go through the personal

How Leaders Can Help a Group Construct New Learning

Rather than focusing on what an individual leader does "to" or "for" others with a particular intent, Linda Lambert describes leadership in schools as happening in the *relationships* among everyone in the community: administrators, teachers, students, and parents. These "reciprocal processes," she says, "enable participants in an educational community to construct meanings that lead toward a common purpose of schooling."

But what does this "constructivist" view of leadership look like in action? How can a leader at once guide a group to learning, root that learning in the needs and experiences of the group, and build new meaning from the group's collective knowledge?

As she facilitates groups, says Nancy Mohr, formerly the principal of University Heights High School in the Bronx, she has learned some useful tools, which value all participants and their thinking and yet show respect for the leader's role in making powerful learning happen together.

"These tools are constructivist," she says, "because they get at and build on the knowledge already embedded in the group, creating new thinking and ideas. By being more directive—designating leaders, insisting upon structures, and building in habits—we are actually being more democratic—using strong, directive facilitation to engage all the members of a group in learning." The tools:

Transparent facilitation. Share the thinking that went into the agenda and into the decisions you have made or changed. This depends on serious listening to the group (including its body language and silences), soliciting regular feedback from it, and designing the work based on what you hear.

Ground rules. At the beginning, elicit from the group its ground rules, and list them for all to agree on. If the rules come from the group, they belong to the group and serve less as restrictions than as permission to speak up and feel safe.

Designing, not planning. Unlike a plan, which can be a mere laundry list, a design is intentionally flexible—inclusive and extensive, yet responsive and adaptable. It considers all of the alternatives in order to make the best use of time, and builds in ways to respond to what participants want and need to learn, how they might best do that, and what knowledge and baggage they bring.

Explicit leadership. Groups want someone to have authority, sometimes even to make them do what they don't feel like doing. We all need to be pushed, but not shoved—the balancing act every teacher knows and grapples with.

Facilitative membership. Leaders are not only designers but members of the group, full participants who do the activities and learn along with the group. Separate roles may be clearer, but ambiguity is part of complex understanding. Initial conversations about the roles of leader and group members help empower the group and clarify expectations for the responsibilities of each member.

Ill-structured tasks and directions. Define problems to be solved instead of giving directions to be followed. Rather than engineering small groups, for example, give the group the parameters you want to use ("Form yourselves into diverse groups of five folks you don't usually talk with"). They can do it as well as you, and will gain some insight as to the task's purpose.

Text-based dialogue. Choose a text as the basis for learning together; then, after one opening question, keep out of the way of the participants. Use body language (such as not looking at the speaker) to get the conversation to go back and forth across the group.

Non-text-based dialogue. A genuine dialogue (as opposed to a traditional discussion) helps groups learn and build solutions together. The group seeks to build the dialogue, not make individual points.

Stories. The stories members share can help tease out issues, make meaning, connect with each other's thinking, and build community on deep levels. And we can all do it; we all have stories to tell.

Right-brain activities. Though they make many facilitators and participants initially uncomfortable, games and art activities reach the child in us all and can have a profound impact on the quality of the group work. Generally, the more dignified the participants, the greater their response to this.

Written or spoken reflections after a session. What are others thinking about the group and its meetings? Various structured feedback mechanisms help share work meaningfully, set standards together, and develop good habits like conciseness, careful listening, sharing air time.

Community building. Building relationships over time, with a group and within a group, has more power than many one-night stands. Without a relationship, nothing will happen. This can easily take up one third of the time spent in the group, even if it continues together over years. "Team building" should not take place separately from "the real work"—the group can build a shared context, share stories, get to know each other, learn how to work together, learn together, and be real together at the same time.

How can a leader guide a group to learning, root that learning in the needs and experiences of the group, and build meaning from the group's collective knowledge?

development it takes to make themselves vulnerable to each other."

Cortez recommends that school leaders start with church groups and labor organizations, and with small issues, not large. "Find out what people are interested in," he says, "and connect with those interests." The chasm between the "contented class" and the disenfranchised, he asserts, narrows considerably once people begin to talk together about their personal stake in a viable community. "Then over the long term you can develop an infrastructure that will get you where you want to go," says Cortez. "Together you share the costs of action and spread the risks."

How Hard It Is

The best school leaders, says the Coalition's executive director, Bob McCarthy, develop a relationship with parents and their community where people expect them to tell the truth about difficult issues, not paper them over. At the same time, they publicly recognize even small advances toward achieving the school's vision, and again and again they connect people's daily actions to the larger goals.

If they set expectations for the pace and scale of change at unrealistic levels, observes Robert Evans, a psychologist who has worked with many Essential school staffs, burnout will creep in like gangrene. In fact, at every level of theory and practice, people involved in school change testify to just how crazy and cranky it makes them.

"People wear out," says Marilyn Hohmann, the former principal of Fairdale High School in Louisville, Kentucky. "They get ticked off and tired out with being beat up by state mandates and high-stakes testing. That just fuels the flames of the old evaluation syndrome that still hangs over us—it makes it so hard to say, 'I don't know how to do this; please help me without labeling me a failure.' No matter how much good you've done with kids, you get blast-

ed. And then the personal piece is always there. Life's exigencies jump in, and you withdraw or get surly."

The resistance to change that school leaders often experience makes perfect sense, notes Rob Evans. "Teachers are trying to deliver change at the same time that they are its targets," he says. "We have to remember what the change means to them—loss, instability, fear, risk." Because most of today's teaching force is already digging into a mid-life stage, school change requires even more support than most leaders realize, he says. "Of many things that improve with age, energy and an appetite for innovation are not among them. Now is not the time to load on new practices without taking away any of the old expectations."

But the balance is hard to strike

between supporting people through necessary changes and pushing them to talk about the intractable problems that dog schools—the inequities of race and class, for example, and their effects on student opportunities and achievement.

"We're always putting out fires," says Paul Schwarz, who is co-director of Central Park East Secondary School in New York City. "Yet our responsibility is to continue to try to convince people to have these important conversations. I know that they will sometimes say, 'I can't do that now.' But we have to say it's the heart of what we do; we can't cancel the meeting. Maybe that's part of the role of leadership—looking at the wider picture rather than at these five kids who are making life impossible for everybody today."

The Human Face of Change

In dealing with the natural human reactions inherent in school change, says Robert Evans, a Massachusetts psychologist who has helped train many of the Coalition's National Faculty, leaders would benefit from orienting their efforts not around techniques but around a few key predispositions or biases:

1. Clarity and focus. Concentrate on one or two big and achievable changes at a time, then pay attention to them at all levels. If there are six big tasks, prioritize and sequence them to give them a chance of succeeding. "Watch where you spend your time when you have an extra twenty minutes here or there," Evans says. "That is sending a powerful message to your staff."

2. Recognition. The best low-cost improvement is to recognize the effort adults make, as well as their successes. "If you consistently deny people confirmation that their efforts are adequate, you demotivate them," says Evans. "We reward kids for hard work and effort; why can't a faculty do that for each other?"

3. Participation without paralysis. The challenge of adopting radical changes in classroom practice grows even harder when it goes along with adopting a whole new process of sharing decisions. "Most schools lose themselves in endless procedures to the point where they don't get around to results that have to do with kids," remarks Evans. "You won't have a consensual system, remember, until you share a belief system. Getting there is very time-consuming and intense—and you can't use consensus to do it!" As long as they make sure that ideas are continually flowing in both directions, Evans says, leaders should not be kept from acting on the change agenda for which they are being held accountable.

4. Confronting entrenched resisters. Once a school change priority is clear, the overt or covert resistance of those opposed to it can lower morale among supporters in very harmful ways. "First in private and then in a faculty meeting, the leader must challenge this, mounting a stout defense of the school's values," says Evans. "Ask other supportive voices to do their part, too. You are not a sheriff dealing with outlaws by yourself."

Raising Power Issues in Schools: Leadership and the Challenges of Equity

Inequities of race and ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, or position in the social structure of schools have much to do with whether every child is learning well, most Essential School educators acknowledge. Do school leaders have a responsibility to raise such power issues as part of school change? And should they take precedence over other pressing issues that face a school?

Nancy Mohr, the former principal of University Heights High School in the Bronx, posed those questions to an ongoing study group that includes Essential school leaders from schools around the country, and from very different cultural milieus. The answers are complex, they agreed; but together they came up with these suggestions for advancing the conversation about what are typically loaded issues in school communities:

- See diversity as an opportunity and as something to be accessed, not managed; don't form a "multicultural committee," but rather be an actively multicultural community.
- Try to see every aspect of the life of the school in terms of equity, instead of bringing the issue out on special days or in special months. Conversation about power inequities does not belong above and beyond the life of the school.
- Frame the conversation through academic entry points, including curriculum, assessment, and instructional strategies.
- Relate power to community issues like behavior, governance, hiring, selection of students.
- Advocate for keeping everyone's eyes on the "big picture," despite multiple distractions.
- Come together before there is a problem, not afterwards. Anticipate fragility, and work to build relationships.
- Think of these conversations as ongoing, not one-shot deals.
- Use outside facilitation to learn how to address these topics, or to create the feeling of safety needed for uncomfortable conversations.
- Acknowledge that these are uncomfortable conversations and make clear that the discomfort is all right, even necessary.
- Start by socializing together before you have the heavy conversations.
- Use text-based dialogues in order to depersonalize issues when starting to talk to each other.
- Use ground rules for these conversations in order to create a community which is safe enough for its members to be uncomfortable. For example:
 - ◆ Agree to begin speaking in the first person about your own experience. Don't assume you can get inside somebody else's experience.
 - ◆ Listen.
 - ◆ Agree to disagree.
 - ◆ Don't let the conversation get cut off. Commit to following through no matter how long, and how many sessions, it takes.

Contributors to this conversation included Deborah Harris of University Heights High School in the Bronx; Paul Schwarz of Central Park East Secondary School in Manhattan; Jackie Simmons, formerly of Robeson High School in Chicago; Mary Burke of Whitfield School in St. Louis, Missouri; Edwina Branch of the School for Arts and Sciences in the Bronx; Lennie Hay, on leave from the Brown School in Louisville, Kentucky; and Louis Delgado of Vanguard High School in Manhattan.

With such charged issues, however, "You don't know where it will go," worries Deborah Harris, who heads University Heights High School in the Bronx. "Will the benefits outweigh the disadvantages? If you turn off more than half your staff at that point, you can cut off the possibility of positive change. They may settle back into what is normal and even become more negative."

The Structures of Safety

In these situations it can help to build new structures, protocols, or habits through which people can grow accustomed to confronting hard issues in a safe environment. Many Essential school leaders have found such means in a "Critical Friends Group" (or CFG), which consists of up to a dozen peers who meet regularly to improve their professional practice through "honest talk with an arm around," as one participant recently put it.

The groups typically include a coach who has received training through the Annenberg Institute's National School Reform Faculty. By focusing on collaboration skills and the centrality of student work, CFG protocols aim to foster the trust that can lead to honest conversation about difficult or threatening topics.

At California's Pasadena High School for the past year, eight teachers have been regularly observing each other's classes and talking over their observations in a Critical Friends Group. Their growing trust in each other, they say, has helped them all improve their teaching practices. "At first I would pick my best class, where I felt most secure, to be observed," says algebra teacher Kevin Crawford. "Now I take more risks and look forward to a realistic response."

Two of the group, for instance, visited Crawford's class and made a chart for him of how various students were interacting during class. Pasadena's overcrowded classrooms often hold well over 40 students, leaving teachers little time

for such individual observation; and Crawford says the chart helped him decide where to put his energies.

"We saw kids talking to each other in the back of the room, for example," says Christelle Estrada, the CFG's coach, "but it turned out they were talking about math."

Two coaches with the School Leadership Project (SLP) work from the Regional Teachers Center at the Francis W. Parker Charter Essential School in Devens, Massachusetts, to improve collaborative skills within teaching teams at Parker and other schools. "Parker teachers routinely work in classroom pairs and develop curriculum together across interdisciplinary academic domains," says

SLP coach Francesca Pfrommer.

"This is very demanding work, so they chose to focus our work this year on listening and on planning skills."

Each school coach attends domain meetings once a week, where they may facilitate conversations, observe and give feedback on group process issues, or introduce protocols for discussing each other's work. "After about three years of coaching," says Pfrommer, "a school staff learns to identify its own collaborative skill needs, help each other develop them, and apply them in everyday teaching and learning without a coach's help."

On the district level as well,

groups like this can help shake loose entrenched habits of mistrust and defensiveness. In Ithaca, New York, administrators from twelve schools (including two Essential Schools) attended six days of summer workshops designed to develop shared goals, improve communication across the district, and increase support for a focus on student performance. The district has fourteen new administrators, ranging from Superintendent Judith Pastel down to the associate principal level.

"We're hoping to build new habits of collaboration and focus that will then affect staff at the school level," says Dave Lehman, who heads the Alternative Community

What Should School Change Leaders Know and Be Able to Do?

What do we look for in a change leader, and how do we know it when we see it? The question comes from Phillip Schlechty, who heads the Center for Leadership in School Reform in Louisville, Kentucky and has written much about the particular problems school leaders face in a time of change. (See resource list, page 8.) He lays out the following suggestions, which are here condensed from his writings:

■ Leaders frame problems and create a sense of urgency. This includes:

- ☛ Analyzing organizational problems, first asking questions that uncover hidden agendas and difficulties, then reframing the problems in ways that encourage action toward change.
- ☛ "Marketing" change to the people who need to support it, by framing the problem and solution in ways tailored to relate to their core concerns.

■ Leaders know and articulate what they believe about schools, and convey their vision of what schools could and should look like. This includes first being able to answer questions like these:

- ☛ What is the primary purpose of schools? Who should they serve and satisfy?
- ☛ Do I believe all children can learn, and learn more, in school? If so, what must I do when that is not happening?
- ☛ What factors cause some children to learn more in school than others? Are these things under schools' control, or beyond their control?
- ☛ What role should the family and other community members play in relation to students and their schooling?

What should happen when my vision clashes with their beliefs about education?

- ☛ What role should the schools play in moral and civic education? Should they reflect the social order or try to shape it?
- ☛ What rules, roles, and relationships should govern behavior within schools, between schools and the district office, and between schools and the community?
- ☛ What obligation does the school and system have to its employees in providing resources for their continuing professional development?

Once they know what they believe about such matters, Schlechty observes, leaders should be able to imagine how schools could look if they consistently reflected those beliefs. Whether that vision comes from themselves or from others, leaders must develop the ability to articulate the vision in an inspiring way, using symbols and metaphors that speak to the heart as well as the head.

■ Leaders define progress and measure results in publicly verifiable ways. This includes:

- ☛ Having a clear picture of the school's current situation.
- ☛ Assessing the capacity of the school to support and sustain change, and having a plan to improve that capacity.
- ☛ Saying clearly what results one wants in the long run, and laying out various ways in which they will be measured.
- ☛ Knowing what short-term results contribute to the long-term results, and acknowledging them often in public.

Readings on Leadership

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School there. "It's based on Fred Newmann's idea of 'circles of support' for school-level change."

To that end, the administrators participated in two three-hour text-based discussions using Fred Newmann and Gary Wehlage's book on successful school restructuring. They routinely do "walkabouts," in which pairs of colleagues walk and talk for half an hour about a focused question (such as "What are you doing in your building to foster a multicultural approach in the classroom?").

And each takes part in a bimonthly Critical Friends Group of peers in similar positions, providing mutual support on change issues.

"It's astonishing how seldom administrators have had this kind of serious conversation with professional colleagues about our work," says Lehman. "But it takes this kind of substantial time to look at important ideas like Newmann's, and to tease out the ways they apply to our schools."

The success of school change may depend on many such efforts by individuals at every level to take responsibility and mutual leadership. Still, how the principal at the fulcrum acts—in situations that require structural, political, human,

and symbolic leadership—clearly has a lot to do with whether a school moves forward, and stays there when its chief moves on.

Whether or not these things come naturally, leaders can learn them. Precisely because leadership is not a personality style but a set of learned skills, we see both quiet leaders and flamboyant ones among the panoply of Essential school success stories.

But all seem to have developed in themselves the capacity to admit that they don't know it all, and a real passion for continuing to learn as they lead their schools toward learning. They all have strong enough egos to give credit to others for their schools' successes—and to absorb themselves whatever blame arises when the risks they ask of others do not work out as planned. And all have a clear idea where they are heading, as well as the courage, constancy, and persistence to keep reminding others of that goal.

If you're not going somewhere you haven't been, Phillip Schlechty likes to say, why would you need a leader? Whether that means one leader or many voices gathering strength in purposive conversation, school change depends on leadership for its life. □



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