
Leader as Learner

It's a new experience every day.

—A principal's voice¹

PRINCIPAL AS LIFELONG LEARNER

There is no setting in which the concept of the lifelong learner is more important than a school. In fact, many professionals now conceptualize the school as a professional learning community (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008) that nurtures a culture of learning not only for students but also for administrators, teachers, support staff, and parents. This is a powerful notion that can impact student success. As Barth (2001b) notes, "More than anything else, it is the culture of the school that determines the achievement of teacher and student alike" (p. 33).

Bennis and Nanus (1985) remind us that successful leaders take responsibility for their own development and are *perpetual learners*. Schlechty (2001) stresses, "If the principal is to help teachers improve what they do, the principal must continuously be learning to improve what he or she is doing" (p. 145). Senge (1990) suggests that a characteristic of the successful leader is the ability to instill in others the desire to learn what is necessary to help the organization reach its mission. And George (2007) reflects, "Authentic leadership is empowering others on their journeys. This shift is the transformation from 'I' to 'We.' It is the most important process learners go through in becoming authentic" (p. 44). Applying this notion to the principal of a school, the leader can model for everyone in the workplace what lifelong learning means. For modeling to be effective, though, it should be sincere, consistent, purposeful, and empowering. Thus modeling authentic and empowering leadership begins with the

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character of the leader—and character is destiny. Zenger and Folkman, in their research based on ratings of 25,000 leaders, remind us, “Everything about great leadership radiates from character” (2002, p. ix). It is no surprise that the 2013 National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) report, *Leadership Matters*, notes, “Great schools do not exist apart from great leaders” (NAESP & NASSP, 2013, p. 1). There are several ways to model effectively.

LEARNING IN MANY CONTEXTS

One way the principal can model lifelong learning is by continuing to participate in the development and demonstration of effective teaching practices. For example, a principal collaborating with teacher leaders can help create faculty meetings in which conversations about teaching, learning, and assessment become institutionalized through various activities. During these conversations, principals should purposefully support the remarks of both new and veteran teachers to model a high regard for the contributions of all faculty. Another context in which the principal can function as learner is during the supervision process. The following scenario demonstrates how the leader-as-learner theme is played out in two ways: learning about behaviors and activities that facilitate student and teacher learning, and also behaviors and strategies that enhance the principal’s effectiveness in the supervisory process.

An effective and common supervisory technique includes a preobservation conference in which the principal and a teacher, through a questioning process, work together to “unpack” the teacher’s thinking about the lesson to be taught. Together they discuss learning objectives, planned teaching behaviors, student activities, evidence of student learning, and data the principal will be collecting. They discuss potential problems and fine-tune the lesson plan. During the observation, the principal, steered primarily by the teacher’s request for information, collects data. Collectively, teacher and principal learn about curricular, instructional, and assessment practices that produce desired student outcomes. In the postobservation conference, the principal and the teacher often examine student work and ask questions that foster reflection on and analysis of the lesson. Together they discuss what worked to facilitate student learning. At the conclusion of these reflections, they analyze what would be done the same and what would be done differently if the lesson were to be taught again.

Additionally, the principal asks, “Thinking about this conferencing process, what strategies and techniques did I use that facilitated your thinking as a teacher?” The principal might also ask, “What might I have done differently?” Thus the principal and the teacher collaboratively analyze the conferencing practices that enhance or hinder teacher thinking and learning about curriculum and instruction. Together they find ways to make the conferencing experience worthwhile for both.

Principal-as-student experiences can be an innovative way to provide a new perspective and important insights about a school. The principal can spend time in classrooms taking on the student role as a participant in a discussion, a team member in a cooperative group, or a reader or teacher. A particularly successful principal-as-student strategy is "Principal for the Day." One high school principal holds an essay contest each year that results in a student exchanging roles with the principal for one day. The principal takes on the class schedule of the student selected as principal and completes the student's homework assignments, attends classes, and takes examinations. This is a wonderful way to celebrate learning, remain visible, attend classes, and build relationships with students. It also increases the principal's awareness of the quality of classroom learning. These experiences can be shared on a schoolwide basis, in faculty meetings, or with the school's parent-teacher organization. Students and teachers appreciate the interest in them and enjoy the novelty of the situation. If a principal has not functioned in these roles before, it is critical to let teachers know ahead of time "what you're up to."

The principal can teach demonstration lessons; possibly on critical thinking skills stressed with the English Language Arts (ELA) Common Core State Standards (CCSS), and record the lessons to use at a faculty meeting. This provides an opportunity to apply new ideas and practices. Then the principal can talk with staff about experiences in teaching and learning associated with presenting lessons. If the principal's lesson is only fair, and the "rough edges are showing," this can be comforting to staff. It is nice to know that leaders are not flawless. This builds trust because teachers realize that the principal has walked in their shoes, is willing to accept feedback from the faculty, and has an understanding of classroom conditions.

The principal can also function as a learner by reading and sharing research with teachers and parents. By writing or speaking about new learnings, the principal can pass on knowledge of recent research while modeling a love of learning.

Still another way that the principal functions in the learner role is by participating in professional development sessions. Too often principals introduce speakers and run off to another meeting. Principal participation emphasizes the importance of these professional development opportunities and validates the teachers' time spent in these sessions.

When the principal attends a conference, there are frequently opportunities to purchase DVDs, podcasts, or download sessions. Teachers should be encouraged to do the same, possibly even watching a live streaming video during the conference or on demand at a later date. Try picking out the best sessions and starting a digital collection in the staff room, teachers' center, or library. These resources should be available for staff or parents. The principal can also send a follow-up report on the conference to staff or sponsor a volunteer brown-bag lunch on key conference ideas. If there is sufficient interest in a topic, wikis or blogs can be initiated to engage in a discussion forum on the school district Web site.

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Principals can help encourage Action Research projects by individuals or groups of teachers on educational ideas of interest to the staff. To illustrate, in one school district several elementary and high school teachers engaged in an Action Research project exploring the use of student portfolios. The teachers met periodically to discuss their experiences and student reactions, and the principal facilitated the process by helping to gather articles on portfolios, keeping a record of the project, and helping to develop an Action Research report with the staff. Staff who were planning to pursue the project during the following school year used several recommendations from this report:

- Continuing the project on a voluntary basis
- Developing portfolio partners among the faculty to compare notes every couple of weeks during the year
- Having students in one class share portfolios with other classes
- Collecting more nuts-and-bolts ideas on portfolios
- Recording oral readings or presentations of student work
- Refining ways to help students reflect on and evaluate their progress through self-assessment and use of rubrics
- Helping teachers fine-tune their conferencing skills with students
- Providing strategies to help teachers structure classes to engage in frequent conversations with individual or cooperative groups of students promoting higher level questions based on close reading of nonfictional texts
- Considering strategies to present portfolios to parents during an evening or afternoon of student-led conferences

These suggestions by teachers assisted both the principal and the teachers in their quest to continually learn. By encouraging teachers to network and use the resources of a principal's office, including secretarial services, and maintaining a database on portfolio progress, principals send a clear message of support for professional development and can be a great help to teachers engaged in learning activities designed to enhance students' classroom experiences.

Another strategy to support learning includes organizing book study groups or clubs among teachers and parents. When principals are involved in these groups as facilitators or participants, the learning leader role is strengthened and modeled. In one high school a successful book study group read *Focus*, by Mike Schmoker (2011b), and *Drive*, by Daniel Pink (2009).

Principals who solicit comments about their job performance from staff members at the end of the year send a strong message that they seek and appreciate staff input as another resource to promote learning. Furthermore, asking for staff feedback models trust building, a stance of openness, and a commitment to ongoing learning. The following form was used for several years by one of the authors to gain faculty input on a principal's performance:

Dear Faculty,

Over the years I have asked each faculty member with whom I have worked to give me helpful hints to improve my job performance. I know that you are all very busy, but I would appreciate it if you could take a few minutes to answer the questions below and help me evaluate my performance so I can do a better job next year. Obviously, your comments will remain confidential. If you would like to remain anonymous, please word process your comments. Please put your comments in the "Harvey" envelope on Prema's desk. I would appreciate your comments by the last faculty day, May 27.

Thanks, Harvey

1. What are some of the things that I am currently doing that you would like to see me continue?
2. What am I currently doing that you would like to see me discontinue next year?
3. What suggestions do you have to help me improve my job performance (e.g., Is there a particular area that I should pursue for additional training? Is there a book or article that you suggest I read?)?
4. Do you have any additional comments?

This procedure is simple to execute and often yields constructive feedback and helpful ideas. It also provides an opportunity for the principal to assess the perceptions of staff in relation to his or her self-perception. Feedback can be enhanced when the perspectives of students, classified staff, parents, assistant principals, and community members are solicited. This type of feedback, often referred to as *360-degree feedback*, can offer multiple perspectives for consideration.

Principals who keep reflective journals often share insights derived from this activity with staff, which sometimes encourages staff members to become reflective about their own craft experiences and practices. Supporting the notion of leader as learner, Barth (1990) emphasizes principals' tremendous capacity to release energy in a school by becoming sustained, visible learners. Barth also describes the phenomenon of an "at-risk" principal as any educator who leaves school at the end of the day with little possibility of continuing learning about the work that he or she does (cited in Sparks, 1993, p. 19). Rolf P. Lynton of the World Health Organization has also offered some powerful insights about reflection by noting that we all go through events on a daily basis. What distinguishes an *event* from an *experience* is that an event only becomes an experience after you have time to reflect.² Each experience offers an opportunity to learn. When teachers, students, and parents see a principal's desire to learn and share ideas, norms and expectations that celebrate learning can develop within a school. Moreover, the *learning leader* model transfers to the classroom, where teachers demonstrate for students that they, too, are both leaders and learners.

THE EXPANDING ROLE OF THE PRINCIPAL

Researchers with The Wallace Foundation (2013), after conducting several studies on student achievement and school leadership, reflected, "Ten years ago, school leadership was noticeably absent from most school reform agendas, and even the people who saw leadership as important to turning around failing schools expressed uncertainty about how to proceed. What a difference a decade makes" (p. 5). With the advent of President Bush's initiative, *No Child Left Behind* in 2001, and President Obama's *Race to the Top* grant program, operating since 2009, researchers and school leaders have been looking for a formula to achieve student success. Not surprisingly, the research consensus is that teachers have the greatest impact on students, while the principal's impact is indirect. "Principal's work through other leaders in schools to influence what goes on inside of classrooms" (Supovitz, Sirinides, & May, 2010, p. 47) and, through their leadership work, "have the potential to unleash latent capacities in organizations" (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010, p. 6).

How can principals influence others? The fundamental leadership responsibilities are as important as ever and remain the same: principals are expected to help create and strengthen the mission and vision, shape the culture, take responsibility for instructional leadership, keep the school safe and orderly, work with faculty and the community, act with integrity, and respond to contextual influences outside of the school (Educational Leadership Policy Standards, 2008). But the principalship has expanded.

Today principals are expected to

- advocate for all students advantaged and disadvantaged, including those facing challenges because of racial, ethnic, religious, economic, exceptionality, gender, LGBT, or homeless issues (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Johnson, 2013);
- facilitate the use of data-based decision making schoolwide and in individual classrooms;
- support small nested and schoolwide professional learning communities to expand and celebrate teacher leadership (NAESP, 2008);
- lead the effort to implement the CCSS aligned with coherent and specific curriculum plans, instructional strategies, assessment measures, and focused staff development initiatives (Jenkins & Pfeifer, 2012);
- recognize that workplace factors, such as building trust, are critical to new and veteran teacher success and desire to stay at a specific school (Johnson, 2012);
- seize the advantages of communicating through advanced social networking technologies, yet respecting the importance of traditional personal interaction with students, teachers, families, and the community (Smith, 2013); and

- recognize that success as an instructional leader depends on management skills to coordinate human and material resources focused on the school mission. Management skills are particularly vital during this tough fiscal period with limited resources (The Wallace Foundation, 2013).

A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

A leader's commitment to promoting lifelong learning throughout an organization is simply a smart strategy and an ethically wise decision when contemplating the world from a global perspective. In his influential book *The World Is Flat*, Thomas Friedman (2005) discusses the fact that successful corporations are cross-training their workers to develop multiple skills because future employment will depend on a worker's ability to be flexible and mobile: "The whole mind-set of a flat world is one in which the individual worker is going to become more and more responsible for managing his or her own career, risks, and economic security" (p. 284). Based on his observations of India and China as well as the instrumental role that technology and initiative play, Friedman stresses that, in recent years, "the global competitive playing field was being leveled. The world was being flattened" (p. 8). Not surprisingly, he supports emphasizing math and science education as well as technology and critical thinking for both women and men. Yet at the same time, Friedman stresses the importance of generalists, those who specialize in integrating subject areas and have "a renaissance view of the world" (Friedman, 2008, p. 2). Friedman, interviewed by Daniel Pink, maintains that school leaders need to recognize "why the liberal arts are more important than ever. It's not that I don't think math and science are important. They still are. But more than ever our secret sauce comes from our ability to integrate art, science, music and literature with the hard sciences. That's what produces an iPod revolution or a Google" (pp. 1-2).

School leaders who seek to understand the demographic changes in their own schools gain a greater perspective on the changes, and engage in lifelong learning, by recognizing the world as a dynamic, interdependent global community in which the "distance" between cultures and world issues is shrinking. In the United States today, there are more and more students who are nonnative English speakers from multicultural, immigrant, or migrant backgrounds. These students and their families have left their native countries to be a part of the U.S. historical narrative, the story of a nation of immigrants that has succeeded because of the ingenuity and hard work of its people.

School principals, as active and influential citizens, have a moral obligation to promote the success of each child in the school, regardless of race, class, ethnicity, gender, or country of origin. At the local school level, this commitment to the success of each child can be realized through the promotion of heterogeneous classes from prekindergarten through Grade 12. That local act sends a powerful message with global implications.

WHEN OLD AND NEW IDEAS CONVERGE

The Value of Repertoire and Celebrating the "Genius of the AND"

As principals' knowledge and experience increase, they are often faced with new ideas that appear to conflict with previous learning. Educators are expected to make either/or decisions regarding innovations that affect instructional practices and, consequently, students. To illustrate, in some quarters the CCSS are perceived as a total break from previous educational initiatives. However, an examination of the standards reveals goals that effective teachers and curriculum specialists have always considered when developing outcomes. To illustrate, McTighe and Wiggins (2012) connect their contemporary concept of backward design and framed curriculum "in terms of worthy outputs" (p. 7) to the classical work of Ralph Tyler in *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction* (1949) and today's *Mathematical Standards* (National Governors Association, 2010). The first question that Tyler suggested more than 60 years ago was, "What educational purposes should the school seek to attain?" (p. 1). Most discussions of today's CCSS begin with a similar output question: What curriculum and instructional practices should be implemented so students are college and career ready? McTighe and Wiggins also note that Tyler emphasized the importance of content and skills, just as the *Mathematics Standards* stress "the need to connect the mathematical practices to mathematical content" (p. 8 in the Standards as cited in McTighe & Wiggins, 2012).

The mandate to teach content and skills is an important issue for learning leaders working to support both curriculum goals with faculty and students. Some educators lean toward the "more content camp," suggesting that teachers often ignore facts for frills, while "21st century proponents" maintain that students can quickly get their facts from the Internet while learning and leveraging their skills. Andrew Rotherham (2008) squarely addresses the issue:

Schools, the 21st century skills argument goes, focus too much on teaching content at the expense of essential new skills such as communication and collaboration, critical thinking and problem solving, and concepts like media literacy and global awareness. . . . This view threatens to reopen a debate in American education that is not new either: content pitted against critical thinking rather than the two complementing each other. (pp. 1-2)

An effective strategy to manage this issue and countless other either/or challenges is to embrace the vision of Collins and Porras (2002) to celebrate the "Genius of the AND" while rejecting the limited "Tyranny of the OR" vision.

Instead of being oppressed by the "Tyranny of the OR," highly visionary companies liberate themselves with the "Genius of the

AND"—the ability to embrace both extremes of a number of dimensions at the same time. Instead of choosing between A OR B, they figure out a way to have both A AND B. (p. 44)

As school leaders, we can easily fall into the either/or trap when working on contentious issues related to teaching, learning, and assessment. Often we are encouraged to discard one idea for another. The "Genius of the AND" reminds us to compromise, seek, and celebrate good ideas—and good people—across the spectrum. We will return to this strategy throughout the book.

From the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) to the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act to Race to the Top (RTTT): Slow but Steady Progress

When studying the history of education in the United States, it is clear that the federal government initially had little intent of playing a major role in statewide education decisions. Remember, education is not mentioned in the U.S. Constitution. However, by the middle of the 20th century, the federal position had permanently changed because of three major acts. First, President Eisenhower decided to use National Guard troops in Little Rock, Arkansas, to enforce the Supreme Court's decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*. Second, in response to the Russian launch of Sputnik in 1957, U.S. leaders decided that this country was falling behind in math and science education, so in 1958 they passed the National Defense Education Act to upgrade schooling in the scientific fields. Third, passage of ESEA in 1965, as part of President Johnson's War on Poverty, directly involved the federal government in compensatory programs, from Title I to Head Start, to lift up the poor and help them succeed in schools. It is helpful to conceive of President Reagan's A Nation At Risk initiative (1983), President Bush's NCLB Act (2002), and President Obama's RTTT Program (2009) of competitive federal grants as part of the government's continued intervention in schools. Although many educators expected President Obama to replace NCLB with a new law, the gridlock in Washington has narrowed the President's action to RTTT grants and waivers related to aspects of NCLB.

NCLB and RTTT have both critics and supporters. Both initiatives have helped keep education a front-burner issue, not only for educators, students, and their parents or guardians, but for all stakeholders who believe that the future success of the United States depends on the quality of its schools. Educators will need to address the following components to meet legislative and public expectations (Alvy & Robbins, 2008; Boykin & Noguera, 2011; Darling-Hammond, 2010; National Governors Association, 2010; Noguera, 2011, 2012; Zhao, 2009):

- Each student, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status, gender, sexual orientation, homeless status or exceptionality, is entitled to a high-quality education. This commitment includes meeting the needs of traditionally voiceless underserved populations.

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- Schools and teachers must be accountable for student learning.
- The achievement and opportunity gaps among different groups must be closed.
- As the CCSS are implemented, school principals must advocate for alignment of curriculum, instructional plans, teacher professional development, and individual state or consortium assessments (e.g., Smarter Balance and Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers).
- High averages on statewide or CCSS consortium assessment tests will no longer be acceptable if students from minority, impoverished, or other underserved groups perform below standard. Disaggregating test scores will remain a critical first step to ensure that the needs of each group are addressed.
- Regardless of statewide or consortium assessments, school leaders will continue to fight for multiple measures of student progress (e.g., teacher observations and both traditional and alternative assessments, including portfolios, culminating projects, and formative tests) to gain a more accurate portrait of student success. Value-added data, although controversial, will likely be a component of the testing equation to assess student progress over time.
- School leaders will continue to struggle with the public's desire for testing accountability and transparency, with the educators' desire to personalize learning and address individual student needs, student voice, and authentic assessments.
- Although the pressure for successful assessment scores is considerable, it is obviously unethical to alter test results to comply with expectations. Principals must stand strong and set a personal example for district leaders and teachers to ensure this does not occur under their leadership.
- The commitment to students must include the teaching of both 21st century skills (e.g., problem solving, media literacy, global awareness, collaborative work) and meaningful content. This commitment must hold for traditionally disadvantaged students and schools where higher-level thinking skills are often neglected in lieu of "teaching to the test" and learning the "facts."
- Decisions related to curriculum, instruction, assessment, classroom management, and professional development should be grounded in evidence-based and Best Practice research.
- Hiring highly qualified teachers in each core subject area regardless of the economic base of the local school district will remain an important social justice objective. Statistically, less qualified teachers, based on certification status and college majors, have been hired disproportionately in schools with greater poverty.
- Supervisors charged with implementing the teacher and principal evaluation systems will need to confront the challenge of fairly weighing student test scores as part of the evaluation process (required by

RTTT) with other performance expectations and professional growth goals so talented individuals are retained and ineffective individuals are not.

- States, districts, and individual schools must provide transparent data to parents and the community, a "report card" that indicates how schools are doing in several categories, including test scores. Schools that do not achieve adequate progress will be expected to take corrective action. Parents will play a greater role in determining their children's educational setting within the realm of school choice.
- Districts and schools will continue to struggle with determining the best ways to assess exceptional students, including English language learners, students with disabilities, and all students with special talents. Response to Intervention (RTI) will be implemented as an important schoolwide early intervention strategy to help all students succeed and reduce the number recommended for special education.
- The alarming number of high school dropouts and underprepared graduates, especially in disadvantaged poor and urban areas, must remain a national focus. The combination of academic rigor and social support, especially related to personalization and trusting teacher student relationships (Boykin & Noguera, 2011, p. 70), is a promising strategy that should be pursued.
- Although the standards and assessment movement is presently emphasizing success in ELA and mathematics with increased interest in STEM subjects, the neglect of other core academic areas, and the visual and performing arts, social and emotional learning, physical education, and health-related schooling responsibilities is of great concern if we are committed to the needs of the whole child.
- Maintaining safe schools continues to be the top priority of all educators and interested stakeholders. Horrific school shootings; tragic weather-related incidents; and bullying, harassment, and intimidation events demand vigilance, better crisis management, and prevention strategies.

A final but important note: Learning leaders armed with essential understanding of how the old and new converge will find themselves equipped with the wisdom to effectively and confidently guide the school into the future.

NOTES

1. Authentic principal voices from interviews, workshops, writings, and informal conversations will be heard throughout the book.
2. We thank Dr. Steve Atwood of UNICEF for introducing us to Dr. Lynton's ideas.

REFLECTIONS

This space provides a place for you to write down ideas that have been generated by this chapter, things you want to try, or adaptations of ideas presented here.

1. What are some things you might do to model leader as learner?
2. What might be some observable indicators or artifacts of a school that is functioning as a professional learning community?
3. How can principals facilitate a learning environment for adults within a school?
4. What questions should principals or assistant principals ask to gain helpful feedback on their performance?
5. How do you think the CCSS and RTTT teacher and principal evaluation mandates will impact your role?
6. Why did you become a school principal, or why would you like to become a principal?
7. What insights or new questions do you have as a result of reflecting on the ideas presented in this chapter?

Leader as Manager

To facilitate learning, the instructional leader also makes sure that the classroom lights are working.

—A principal's voice

As practitioners, we need to ensure that schedules work, Smart Boards, and document cameras are in classrooms, and transition times run smoothly. Instructional leadership behaviors will have a greater impact on student success and often reflect effective long-range leadership planning, but teachers, students, parents, and the community are more likely to notice immediate problems due to management glitches (R. Grant, personal communication, October 2007). These problems include the less-than-glamorous flooding toilet, school bus breakdown, schoolwide computer server or Internet problem, scheduling error, and leaking ceiling. The long-range vision may make you a great leader tomorrow, but today the public notices the poorly lit hallway (which is interpreted by some as displaying minimal regard for safety and security). However, we should not be fooled into thinking that success as an educational leader ends with neat bookshelves, quiet hallways, or the latest software for student records. We must not forget that students should be the ultimate beneficiaries of all management actions. Yet much of the leadership literature contains a subtle disdain for management.

Although the concept of the principal has shifted from gatekeeper (Deal & Peterson, 1994) to instructional leader, collaborative decision maker, leader of leaders, and results-oriented instructional leader (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2010), any discussion of leadership can become a

romantic abstraction if leadership is not discussed hand in hand with management. One has to secure and coordinate human and material resources to manage leadership. Part of management is paying attention to a school's physical environment; it is difficult to focus on learning if the physical environment does not promote it. For example, changing the contents of a display case outside of a high school office each month can send a strong message about student learning. If the display case includes work from various subjects and extracurricular activities, the school is honoring each discipline.

INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP REQUIRES EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT

Effective principals are effective managers. They must communicate, develop relationships, and coordinate the efforts of teachers, assistant principals, custodians, secretaries, counselors, librarians, students, cafeteria workers, parents, transportation workers, central office, security personnel, social workers, and community partners. Although we have previously stressed the importance of leadership and management (Alvy & Robbins, 1998), the abundance of contemporary research supporting both elements is a significant shift in the literature. In a study sponsored by Stanford University, Grissom and Loeb (2009) concluded,

Effective instructional leadership combines an understanding of the instructional needs of the school with an ability to target resources where they are needed, hire the best available teachers, provide teachers with the opportunities they need to improve, and keep the school running smoothly. (p. 23)

Grissom and Loeb identify "Organizational Management" as the complementary element to instructional leadership. This is similar to a key practice of effective principals identified by The Wallace Foundation (2013), "Managing people, data and processes to foster school improvement" (pp. 4-6). Chenoweth and Theokas (2013), drawing conclusions from eight years of research on how high-poverty schools turn around, state that effective principals, "put instruction at the center of their managerial duties. . . . Where once the job was primarily defined as a managerial one, principals are now expected not just to run a smooth operation, but also to be change leaders and improve achievement" (p. 58).

As instructional leaders and managers, it is critical to display respect for every individual who serves the school. When considering the primary purpose of schooling, principals should always remember that, although some employees may appear to be on the periphery, everyone contributes in his or her own way to a school's success. Principals must model in all their relationships the behavior that they expect throughout the school and the community. To illustrate, principals or assistant principals should work closely with classified staff, such as bus drivers, who appear on the

fringe of the classroom experience because they can offer a valuable perspective. Principals, assistant principals, or district personnel should share with classified staff the school goals and advocate important programs (e.g., antibullying efforts). Because of their unusual schedule, bus drivers are in the community, the diners, the barbershops, hair salons, and other public places during part of the school day. What individuals say about the school in these venues can go a long way toward influencing how the school is perceived in the community.

Honoring these workers can have a very positive affect on them. To illustrate, Johnston (2001) relates the story of Ramon Curiel, who recruits and hires the 6,000 bus drivers, teacher aides, custodians, and other classified staff in Long Beach, California. Curiel gave credit to and celebrated their contribution to the overall improved grades of the students in the district because of the role they played in developing school climate. To the classified staff he said, "Look, you had something to do with this" (p. 18). As a bus driver in Harrisonburg, Virginia, reflected, "I am the first point of contact kids have with the school. A friendly greeting from me when they step on the bus brings a smile to their faces. My positive attitude influences what teachers experience on a daily basis."

A principal's work produces many additional management challenges involving policies, resources, behaviors, procedures, and data. These challenges can be classified into four categories that reflect the various arenas in which the leader must function as manager: classroom, school site, community, and support services.

MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES AND STRATEGIES

Classroom

Principals must help to maximize the availability of sufficient and high-quality classroom supplies and instructional resources to enable teachers to focus on student learning. Principals need to be on top of the classroom supply inventory so that key items are available during the year for teachers and students. Some principals delegate this job to a responsible individual or secretary. In small schools, principals retain this function for themselves. Although it is important to know how to delegate, one can never give up the responsibility for the task. When you delegate, you need to check for clear understanding, provide support, and follow up regularly. If the person to whom you have delegated comes up with an innovation, assure the person that you have confidence in him or her and encourage the resourcefulness.

The availability of classroom supplies and instructional resources for staff is heavily reliant on data relating to curricular needs. One must ask teachers whether the resources are serving their purposes. Does a particular instructional resource improve the quality of the educational program? Are the resources helpful for gathering assessment data to measure student

progress? Is there enough money in the budget for a year's supply of computer paper? What classroom supplies were consumed completely last year? What instructional resources are in great demand at the start of the school year? What are some of the new resources available to make life easier for the staff (e.g., tablet devices)? How can the resources be distributed more efficiently? Is waste taking place, and if so, why?

Staff members' perceptions of resource availability are another important consideration. The policies for allocating classroom supplies and instructional resources reveal much about the values and beliefs of the organization. For example, is the supply room locked and materials strictly allocated? Are the veteran teachers in possession of the best resources; do they keep "a rainy day stash of supplies" (Marrs-Morford & Marshall, 2012, p. 38)? With your own school in mind, reflect on how "the system" works. Does it match the mission of the school? If your school promotes enrichment for all students, then you must have enrichment material and classroom options available for various instructional disciplines (e.g., novels, technology resources, online subscriptions, science kits, challenging math manipulatives) that can be used by all classroom teachers. A teachers' resource center in a school or district office can serve as a central area in which to keep instructional material to be used by all teachers, which may diminish greatly the desire to hoard the best instructional material.

With regard to the environment, is your school ecologically conscientious? Do the school office and each classroom collect paper to be reused or sent to a recycling plant? Are plastic containers, cans, and bottles collected for recycling? Helpful ideas about being more environmentally conscious can come from a variety of sources. One high school ecology club convinced the superintendent to purchase copier paper for the district that was ecologically superior to paper purchased previously. To save paper, handbooks and weekly newsletters can be posted online on school and district websites. Although papers savings will be substantial, copies need to be available for those who do not have Internet access (Marrs-Morford & Marshall, 2012, p. 38).

Some principals encourage staff input on the creation of policies and procedures related to resource requisition and allocation, which expands the leadership function of many staff members. These new roles build ownership of school-level practices and policies. If greater teacher involvement in resource allocation follows expanded teacher involvement in curricular and instructional decisions, then the resources will surely be used more efficiently and with greater meaning.

Although Web-based student information systems software enables schools to keep data for almost every important category (e.g., attendance, student demographics, schedules, grades, transportation, lunch data, budget, discipline), it's critical that selected systems address district needs, are user friendly, and include training and timely updates. These programs should make life easier for teachers so they can concentrate on teaching and use record-keeping to help personalize learning and address student needs.

School Site

A safe environment contributes to an effective school. Furthermore, the physical appearance of a school can contribute to and reflect positive or negative school climate or morale (Astor, Benbenishty, & Estrada, 2009). Graffiti and vandalism negatively affect the school and its administration, teachers, students, and community. Thus principals should inform school custodians to remove graffiti immediately and quickly repair broken lights and windows, loose banisters, or damaged lockers to ensure safety and maintain pride in the appearance of the school.

There are many ways to positively influence the physical environment of the school. For example, one school staff collectively designed a hallway mural that depicted key standards addressed in K–5 classrooms; images of the Nile River, pyramids, and Egyptian mummies underscored essential social studies learnings. Classes at some schools have donated benches, trees, and flower gardens as an indication of their commitment to the school. This has significantly decreased vandalism and enhanced social and emotional competence.

Principals and teachers need to recognize that a school's physical environment or indoor air quality (IAQ) may be contributing factors if students appear to be lethargic or are experiencing frequent nasal, throat, eye, skin, or lung problems. Asthma in particular is a problem because it is triggered by dampness and mold. As the primary cause of absenteeism in schools, students suffering from asthma often see their grades drop because of nonattendance (Environmental Protection Agency [EPA], 2012b). Further, "nearly half [of U. S. schools] have problems related to indoor air quality" (EPA, 2012b). Maintenance works. Increased maintenance leads to improved attendance, health, and academic performance. "In one study, students in classrooms with higher outdoor air ventilation rates scored 14 to 15 percent higher on standardized test scores than children in classrooms with lower outdoor air ventilation rates" (EPA, 2012a). Recommendations to improve IAQ include following scheduled maintenance inspections (thus avoiding backlogs) and reminding staff to report moisture, leakage, and signs of mold (EPA, n.d.). It is certainly counterproductive if school districts hire fewer janitorial staff or reduce their hours as a cost-cutting measure if IAQ problems persist—likely increasing student absenteeism (EPA, 2012a). The EPA has published on its website guidelines and resources to help schools with environmental concerns (www.epa.gov/iaq/schools).

A related responsibility is maintaining a litter-free environment. Principals have organized "trash patrols" and other activities to assure an attractive campus. One principal developed a program called The Eagle's Eyes. The eagle is the school's mascot, and anytime someone was observed doing something to enhance the campus—from picking up litter to planting a tree—that person would be acknowledged with a note written on stationery headed with "The eagle's eyes saw...." These individuals could also be celebrated during assemblies.

Often overlooked as a principal management responsibility is the need to keep support personnel informed about student behavior and expectations. Principals find student behavior to be an essential topic, not only for teachers but also for parent volunteers, paraprofessionals, and support personnel such as school bus drivers, cafeteria workers, classroom aides, and library personnel. To address this topic, seminars can be planned to discuss issues related to student behavior as well as confidentiality issues and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). When the emphasis is on organizing, teaching, and reinforcing students ("catching students being good") during the first three weeks of school, the staff and support personnel generally report fewer discipline referrals. These strategies will contribute to a safe, vibrant learning environment.

Leading and Learning by Wandering Around

In addition to physical appearance and air-quality issues, plant maintenance, and safety are also critical management dimensions. One way to ensure safety is through Leading and Learning by Wandering Around (LLBWA), which involves the principal purposefully getting out from behind the desk and walking around the school (Robbins & Alvy, 2004). Research by Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) reveals that a key principalship responsibility correlated with student achievement is "Situational Awareness . . . leaders' awareness of the details and the undercurrents regarding the functioning of the school and their use of this information to address current and potential problems" (p. 61). It is our belief that LLBWA is a technique that uniquely enables a leader to monitor the pulse of a school by keeping abreast of the undercurrents and potential problems. Marzano et al. (2005) suggest that one should not be surprised that situational awareness is an important principalship responsibility because "it makes intuitive sense that a school leader must understand the innermost workings of the school at the nuts-and-bolts level to be effective. The more one knows about the inner workings of an organization, the more one is able to lead and manage that organization" (pp. 64–65).

In this chapter, the strategy of LLBWA refers primarily to maintenance concerns. However, LLBWA has an additional, powerful application: promoting instructional excellence (discussed in Chapter 9). A key attribute of this technique is that the principal must have a clear plan for where the "wandering" will occur. The goal is to visit these areas frequently, with classrooms being the top priority. Many principals create a checklist of key areas, from classrooms to storage sheds, with their smartphone or tablet using a spreadsheet app. Just customize the app for your school. Figure 2.1 provides an elementary school example.

Whenever the principals have a few minutes, they look down the checklist, determine where they have not visited during the month, and purposefully wander to one of those locations. In doing this, one principal discovered that an electrical outlet was located next to a sink in the boys' restroom. A call to the maintenance department . . .

Figure 2.1 Example of a Leading and Learning by Wandering Around Record

	September	October	November
Kitchen			
Cafeteria			
Custodian's office			
Girls' restroom			
Boys' restroom			
Library			
Storage shed			
Bike rack			
Kindergarten playground			
Regular playground			
Baseball diamond			
Classrooms—Wing A			
Room 1			
Room 2			
Room 3			
Room 4			
Room 5			
Room 6			
Classrooms—Wing B			
Room 7			
Room 8			
Room 9			
Room 10			
Room 11			
Room 12			
Kindergarten room			
Computer lab			

hazardous condition. A great way to visit classrooms and the rest of the school is to do so with the school custodian. A principal or assistant principal might meet with the custodian once a month, and they walk around the school. This enables them to see maintenance needs and communicate about school programs and activities as well as get input from teachers. On these walking tours the building "talks." A strong message is conveyed to students, teachers, parents, and visitors by what is on the hallway walls, on the walls of the cafeteria, in the display cases, or on the floor. A walk in

one school revealed that the lawn was being watered five minutes before physical education classes were going to play on the field.

Usually, there are 5–10 maintenance requests that result from these walks. The walks provide maintenance personnel with undivided attention from an administrator and opportunities to receive treasured feedback. Also, these walks let the staff know that the principal is interested in the day-to-day running of the school.

Spending time in corridors, classrooms, stairwells, and other areas throughout the building gives the principal a chance to oversee plant safety and spread good news and caring words to staff, students, community members, and parents. Using this approach, the principal is able to communicate, plan proactively, and minimize interruptions. Interestingly, in a study of atypically low-violence and high-violence schools in Israel (Astor et al., 2009), principal visibility, similar to the LLBWA approach, made the difference in the low-violence schools. Consider these two contrasting descriptions: in a low-violence school: "The principal is seen by the school as having a central role in driving the school agenda. . . . He spends much of his time outside the office engaged with students and knows what occurs on campus" (p. 444); in a high-violence school: "The principal does not leave his room and does not visit the school grounds" (p. 444).

Another proactive management technique is to visit classrooms before or after school to see bulletin boards, special displays, learning centers, and student work. A principal can note, for example, whether a computer lab or journalism classroom is used actively during these times. When staff members receive a complimentary note from the principal about their rooms, it is a great way to start the day and reinforces the notion that the classroom is the center of the school.

LLBWA is also an excellent time management technique. The principal uses precious minutes in an efficient way to manage what is important. One principal talked of conducting "one-legged conferences" during her walks about campus. As an example, she cited talking with a custodian about his excellent care of the front lawn and simultaneously requesting that he mow the lawn by the primary wing at a time other than 12:45 p.m., when students were engaged in reading. She invited him to participate in the reading program at that time so that students could see him modeling reading as a lifelong skill. Another idea might be to invite the custodian into the classroom to talk about how he uses math in his daily work. Cafeteria staff, the nurse, librarians, teachers, parents, and community members could be asked to share how they have applied learnings from school.

Community

Principals manage the image of the school in the community and the communication flow between school and community by adopting a proactive stance. This can greatly affect the community perception of the school and support for school activities and funding, as well as students'

perceptions of parental support for the school. Several examples that follow were shared at a job-alike session sponsored by the National Association of Elementary School Principals and held in Washington, D.C., for Nationally Distinguished Principals.

Principals can conduct a regular "Neighborhood Walk and Watch" designed to take the principal into the neighborhood that surrounds the school to talk with community members, spread good news about the school and students, find out about community developments, and lend an interested ear.

One principal organizes a late spring "Dinner on the Grounds." Each class prepares for this event by writing letters of invitation and sending them to family members and key civic leaders, all of whom must make reservations to attend this function. At a special assembly held during the evening, the school takes the opportunity to highlight its mission and important values by conducting a ceremony in which awards are given for the most improved student, student leadership, good citizenship, and academic excellence. Following the assembly, quilts and blankets are spread out, sack dinners are handed out, and the school band plays.

Many principals enhance the image of the school in the community by joining civic service clubs and regularly reporting on school affairs. Often these organizations provide grant opportunities for schools, so keeping them informed may benefit the school in several ways. In addition, administrators meet with education reporters and editors from the local newspaper and cultivate positive relationships with them.

One principal challenged the president of a large international seed company to trade places with him for a day. This joint get-acquainted venture resulted in a delightful school-business partnership. Scientists and other personnel from the company worked with the teachers to develop a project in which students formed greenhouse companies in their classrooms and produced plants for a Mother's Day plant sale.

Another principal initiated an e-mail pen-pal program between students and a local navy submarine unit. In one high school, students corresponded with scientists at the South Pole.

Recognizing the rising costs of feeding families, one school extended a hand to community members by organizing a bulk food purchase. This involved placing large orders for frozen foods to secure a substantial discount for community members. In a Bronx, New York, school, selected students were discreetly given backpacks of food to provide some nourishment during the weekend.

Still another example of managing the school in the community occurred when the principal and staff of a school in Hawaii realized that many parents of preschoolers had negative school experiences themselves and were therefore reluctant to come to school. So the principal and staff decided to go to the community. They set up blankets and provided refreshments in a local park and invited the parents to visit. On each blanket was a learning station for parents. This activity demonstrated to the community that the school was approachable and had much to offer.

In Rockingham County, Virginia, a school's staff volunteered to conduct parent conferences at a local chicken-processing plant where a large number of immigrant parents worked. The school administration provided Spanish and Russian interpreters to communicate with parents who didn't speak English. This increased parents' understanding of student learning and access to the school and greatly enhanced school-community relationships.

Support Services

Societal conditions and increased social service agency cooperation have made support services in the community still another facet of principals' management responsibilities. That is, to serve students, staff, and parents, principals need to know about the community resources available to support the local school. Many principals, especially in full-service schools, work with agencies that provide support, including Big Brothers and Big Sisters organizations, the community clothes closet, the county health department, mental health service agencies, child protective services, crisis lines, the community library, and services for the homeless. Most schools have resource files with the name, address, e-mail, and phone number of each agency. The files might also contain literature collected during get-acquainted visits to these organizations. Having well-organized files enables easy access to this information for parents and students in need. During Open House or Back to School Night, a directory of information regarding support services can be distributed and made available online to parents. This same information can also be provided to students. (For further discussion of community-based organizations that assist schools, see Chapter 17.)

CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLANNING

The American Academy of Experts in Traumatic Stress defines a crisis as "a traumatic event that seriously disrupts our coping and problem-solving abilities. It is typically unpredicted, volatile in nature and may even threaten our survival. A crisis can present a drastic and tragic change in our environment. This change is generally unwanted and frightening, and may leave us with a sense of vulnerability and helplessness" (Lerner, Volpe, & Lindell, 2003, p. 11). Each school faces the possibility of an emergency at any time. Weather emergencies may include tornadoes, hurricanes, excessive rain, windstorms, floods, or earthquakes. School, medical, or drug emergencies may include kidnappings, shootings, terrorist attacks, hate crimes, cyberbullying, a drug overdose, a severe allergic reaction, fires, traffic accidents, a sudden death of a classmate or teacher, or a tragedy in the community.

Tragic PreK-12 school shootings in the United States and abroad, and the horrific events of September 11, 2001, have been wake-up calls for everyone associated with schools to proactively develop crisis management plans. The Sandy Hook tragedy, Virginia Tech, and Northern Illinois

University have taught us that everyone is vulnerable, from PreK–12 to the university. An effective plan is the best opportunity to reduce the chance of a tragedy and to minimize injuries and save lives when a tragedy does occur.

Shortly after the tragedy of September 11, some of the nation's chief executives were asked to "offer a vision for tackling an overwhelming disaster. Their wisdom, distilled, came down to four basic truisms: be calm, tell the truth, put people before business, then get back to business as soon as possible" (Wayne & Kaufman, 2001, p. 1). Following this wisdom entails being prepared. If crisis management tactics and practices are well planned and in place, they provide the scaffolding for leadership action when an unexpected crisis occurs. Bill George (2007) reminds us that an important precursor to developing an effective crisis management plan is to be aware of one's values and their impact on action:

It is under pressure—when your success, your career, or your life hangs in the balance—that you must decide what your values are. When you are forced to make trade-offs between your values under difficult circumstances, you learn what is most important in your life and what you are prepared to sacrifice for. Those who develop a clear sense of their values *before* they get into a crisis are better prepared to keep their bearings and navigate through difficult decisions and dilemmas when the pressure mounts. (p. 87)

Of course, when acts against students or staff occur, it is essential that the missing social and emotional ingredients that may have contributed to the alarming events are not lost, given the immediate need to respond to the crisis.

The Federal Response to Sandy

Hook: Purposeful Emergency Planning

Every school must have a crisis management planning manual that includes appropriate steps for each type of emergency. Following the Sandy Hook events, President Obama asked several federal agencies, including the Departments of Education, Homeland Security, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency, to prepare a new federal document for school crisis planning that was titled the *Guide for Developing High-Quality School Emergency Operations Plans* (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). The Guide provides an excellent broad outline for districts and schools that want to review their present crisis plan or develop a new plan. Six general planning steps are recommended (pp. 5–23):

1. **Form a Collaborative Planning Team**—select team members, "lessons learned from experience indicate that operational planning is best performed by a team" (p. 5)
2. **Understand the Situation**—identification and assessment of threats, hazards, vulnerabilities, and risks

3. **Determine Goals and Objectives**—determination of which threats and hazards will be addressed, ranking the risk possibility and developing goals and objectives for each one
4. **Plan Development (Identifying Course of Action)**—based on threats, hazards, and determined objectives, an action plan is developed with scenarios addressing “the what, who, when, where, why and how for each threat and hazard” (p. 14)
5. **Plan Preparation, Review, and Approval**—draft plan reviewed by key stakeholders including “first responders, local emergency management officials and staff” (p. 16)
6. **Plan Implementation and Maintenance**—stakeholders hold meetings, train based on specific roles and responsibilities, executing drills, reviews, and continuous revisions with community partners. “Plans should evolve as the school and planning team learn lessons, obtain new information and insights and update priorities” (p. 22).
Download the complete Guide at:
rems.ed.gov/docs/REMS_K-12_Guide_508.pdf

Crisis Planning: The Nuts and Bolts

Although the preceding Guide provides general planning steps, very specific practical elements of a good plan need to be considered. The following “nuts-and-bolts” suggestions were adapted from several excellent sources (Bagin & Gallagher, 2001; Dwyer, Osher, & Warger, 1998; Lawton, 2002; Lerner et al., 2003; National Mental Health Association, 2006; National School Public Relations Association, 1996; U.S. Department of Education, 2013; Warner, 2000). An effective plan should include the following practical elements:

- The rationale for the plan (e.g., zero tolerance for bullying, supervising hallways), noting that prevention is the first step to avoiding a crisis
- A list of crisis team members; although the school will have a core team on campus for the initial crisis period, an expanded team should be included in all planning and used during the crisis (e.g., principal; assistant principals/deans; counselors; school psychologists; classified representatives such as secretaries, teacher aides, and custodians; central office personnel; school nurse; school security officers; appropriate safe and drug-free program coordinators; law enforcement, fire, and emergency service personnel; community social service and health service agency representatives; clergy; media representatives; parent and student representatives)
- A generic form to define and assess a crisis situation
- Generic procedures that go into effect for all crises

- A regularly updated emergency phone tree with chain-of-command information
- An updated list of faculty with current American Red Cross training certification
- A description of types of crises covered and specific procedures for each crisis, with clearly coded or separate colored pages for each type of crisis. For crises that demand lockdowns, a shelter in place, safe rooms, and escape routes, alternative routes and rooms should be part of the plan (e.g., an active shooter might be blocking a route)
- A list of crisis code signals for faculty; students; and fire, police, and emergency service personnel
- Maps of facilities with areas for a crisis control center, distributed to faculty and fire and police personnel
- Maps clearly delineating evacuation procedures, distributed to faculty and fire and police personnel
- A designated crisis spokesperson for faculty, media, and parent communication
- A description of communication procedures with emergency service personnel for immediate contact
- Information on faculty and community training procedures and school drill schedules (e.g., lockdown, tornado, fire drill, active shooter)
- A plan to ensure that all critical parties have received the crisis management planning manual
- Copies of brochures that have been distributed to parents relating to school crisis planning
- Templates of "backpack" letters that address specific crises
- Procedures to ensure that students, staff, parents, and community members are kept informed and comforted during the aftermath of the crisis
- An evaluation process to update plans each year or following a crisis; most recent updated plans should be available for downloading on district and school websites

Developing a School-Community Plan for the Prevention of Serious Violence

To be truly proactive, preventive measures relating to the possibility of serious violence should also be part of crisis management planning. The U.S. Department of Education report *Early Warning, Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools* (Dwyer et al., 1998) includes many excellent strategies to help schools prevent and deal with violent incidents. The difference that one individual can make in connecting with a potentially violent student is a primary theme of the report. All members of the community, administrators, teachers, families, fellow students, classified staff, and community stakeholders must collaborate to develop positive relations with students. The authors of this report make the following essential points:

- Safe and responsive schools are characterized by a focus on academic achievement; welcoming and involving families in the school; links to important community agencies, including the police, emergency and health services, and the faith-based community; an emphasis on positive relations among students and staff; an open school discussion concerning safety issues; fair and equal treatment by faculty, staff, and students in terms of racial groups, ethnic background, religious preference, and sexual orientations; eliminating targeting or bullying of students; creating safe and nonintimidating ways for students to share concerns with administration, faculty, counselors, or parents about potential violent acts; and disciplinary policies that include a code of conduct with specific consequences and clear policies concerning antiharassment, antiviolence, and due process rights.
- Early warning signs of possible violence include feelings of rejection, persecution, or social withdrawal and isolation; having been a victim of violence at home or in school; low interest in school and academics; expressions of violence in drawing, writings, or speech; impulsive, threatening, and bullying behavior; disciplinary and violent history; intolerance and prejudicial attitudes; drug or alcohol abuse; gang affiliation; and access to firearms.
- Imminent warning signs of serious violence include severe physical fighting at home or school, vandalism of property, rage for minor reasons, detailed threats and plans to harm or kill others, possession and use of firearms, sudden withdrawal, and self-injurious behaviors or threats of suicide.
- Intervention practices, depending on severity of threat, include contacting the principal, guidance counselor, school psychologist, family, health service, or law enforcement agency; persistent efforts to help a student and cut through the bureaucracy even when the threat is diminished; avoiding inappropriate labeling of a student because of profiling; and enforcement of the Gun Free School Act, requiring expulsion of students for a minimum of one year for bringing a firearm to school.
- Intervention practices to improve the behavior of violent students include access to a team of education specialists to assist students; parents and teachers sharing responsibility with child and family service agencies, law enforcement, the juvenile justice system, and other agencies; working closely with parents of troubled children; maintaining confidentiality when appropriate; developing the capacity of staff, students, and families to help; simplifying staff requests for assistance; implementing early intervention procedures; developing social skills programs; and referring children for special education evaluation.
- Action steps for students to create safe schools include participating in peer mediation and conflict resolution programs, listening to friends and encouraging them to seek out a trusted adult, joining organizations that oppose violence in schools, joining community youth-oriented activities, working with teachers and the administration to create

a safe and nonbureaucratic process for reporting violence-related activities, knowing the school's code of conduct, working with law enforcement officials in the school on safety audits and safety tips, role modeling appropriate behavior when intensive feelings of anger arise, and seeking help from a trusted adult.

- Suggestions by experts to maintain a safe physical environment include maintaining supervised access to buildings and grounds; reducing class and school size; adjusting schedules to minimize time in hallways or other potentially dangerous locations; modifying traffic flow patterns to limit conflicts; conducting a safety audit; closing campuses during lunch; supervising key areas at critical times; prohibiting congregating students in at-risk areas; having adults, including parents, visible in the school; staggering dismissal and lunch periods; monitoring areas around the school; and coordinating safe routes to and from school with law enforcement officials (Dwyer et al., 1998).

After a series of school shootings in September and October of 2006, safety experts stressed three key points related especially to the tragedy of shootings by students or outsiders. First, it is critical that all students are "visible to others in meaningful, responsible ways" (Chaltain, 2006, p. 48) and that they are valued by adults in the school. Second, Gregory Thomas, New York City's former security chief of schools, states that "creating real and imagined barriers around schools is another way to deter intruders who are looking for a vulnerable target. 'Imagined' barriers are signs that tell visitors to report to the front office for a pass, or reminders that the school is in a 'gun-free, drug-free zone that tells people there will be more dramatic consequences for certain behaviors'" (quoted in Maxwell, 2006, p. 17). Third, Thomas emphasizes that adults and students must be sensitive to the environment, with students helping adults identify intruders who are strangers inside or outside of the immediate school area. Adults need to respond and challenge intruders if necessary, either personally or with the assistance of security personnel.

Responding to an Active Shooter Situation

(U.S. Department of Education, 2013, pp. 63–64):

1. Since law enforcement may not be immediately present, "making sure staff know how to respond and instruct their students can help prevent and reduce the loss of life" (p. 63).
2. "There is no single answer for what to do, but a survival mindset can increase the odds of surviving. As appropriate for your community, it may be valuable to schedule a time for an open conversation regarding this topic" (p. 63).
3. "During an *active shooter situation*, the natural human reaction, even if you are highly trained, is to be startled, feel fear and anxiety,

and even experience initial disbelief and denial. You can expect to hear noise from alarms, gunfire and explosions, and people shouting and screaming. . . . There are three basic options: run, hide, or fight. You can run away from the shooter, seek a secure place where you can hide and/or deny the shooter access, or incapacitate the shooter to survive and protect others from harm" (p. 63). Extensive details on training strategies related to running, hiding, and fighting can be found on the downloaded U.S. Department of Education Guide (2013).

4. It is critical to consider "that it is not uncommon for people confronted with a threat to first deny the possible danger rather than respond. . . . [During the World Trade Center tragedy], people close to the floors impacted waited longer to start evacuating than those on unaffected floors . . . Train staff to overcome denial and to respond immediately, including fulfilling their responsibilities for individuals in their charge. For example, train staff to recognize the sounds of danger, act, and forcibly communicate the danger and necessary action (e.g., "Gun! Get out!") (p. 64).

Final Thoughts on Crisis Management

Bringing in key community members involved in emergency work (e.g., firefighters, protective service workers, trauma unit personnel) to speak with students helps develop a respect for and awareness of emergency procedures. Furthermore, having a strong public relations program with the local police department, including officers speaking at the school about proactive crime prevention or automobile safety, could later prove very valuable if the police need to be called into the school's vicinity because of an emergency.

It is helpful to provide time for school student service teams (e.g., nurses, school counselors, social workers) to have regular contact with related community health professionals. Communication between school personnel and community professional groups can increase knowledge and significantly inform actions. In the most serious cases, this can lead to valuable coordination regarding potential teenage suicides or gang violence. The contact also keeps school personnel informed about current research to help students who are bulimic or anorexic. Child protective service personnel can offer useful information about child abuse—how to recognize it, how to raise teacher and student awareness, and how to work with abused students. Administrators and teachers are required by federal law to report suspected cases of child abuse. Indicators related to physical abuse, physical neglect, sexual abuse, and emotional abuse must be followed up on by school personnel (Morrison, 2009).

Although very rare, students have died from eating foods with ingredients to which they are extremely allergic. The ultimate tragedy for a family, school, and community is, of course, a child's death. Schools must ensure that they have updated information regarding students' health,

medication, and psychological needs. Those who need to know should be informed. Health and emergency procedure data should be updated regularly. Student information systems that include student emergency information and photos are vital during a crisis. Key facts such as food allergies or medical/health problems, custody issues, and other important data should be highlighted and communicated to appropriate personnel, including the school secretary, the nurse, cafeteria workers, counselors, social workers, and teachers.

Many schools offer workshops for teachers, support staff, and administrators to prepare for emergencies. Medical preparedness can include training to cope with shock victims, people who are choking or having epileptic seizures, people who are bleeding severely, and those who need CPR. Areas where accidents might occur should be identified and procedures developed to address each possible accident. Obvious locations are playgrounds, hallways, locker rooms, cafeterias, and bus stops. An emergency crisis kit might include a flash drive with current student data, a crisis management manual, a bullhorn, a phone tree, permanent markers, wristbands, legal pads, pens, a fully charged smartphone, and a current yearbook, in addition to typical first-aid resources.

We have learned during the past 20 years that school leadership is much more than instructional leadership and management. School leaders are expected to stand strong in the face of tragedy whether caused by humans or nature. Our schools have been changed by Columbine, 9/11, and Sandy Hook; hurricanes Katrina and Sandy; and tornadoes in Missouri and Oklahoma. Some of these events took the lives of children in school, while other tragedies made attending school overwhelming, and in some cases impossible. Although it is accurate that schools experience fewer acts of violence than in the past, those who have lost children in school will not be comforted by that fact. Principals have learned some lessons, however, that can help us move forward. Here are a few:

- When tragedy strikes, the community needs the principal to stand strong. Part of leadership is having the courage to put one foot in front of another and rallying the community when circumstances are most dark. The courage of Dawn Hochsprung, principal of Sandy Hook Elementary School, and the other educators who lost their lives on December 14, 2012, will inspire a generation of school administrators to lead their schools and communities as passionate advocates for sound crisis management planning. These plans must be based on thoughtful prevention, protection, quick response and recovery strategies that “[restore] the learning environment” (U.S. Department of Education, 2013).
- We have learned that it is now more frightening not to talk about an act concerning crisis management than to ignore the topic even though active shooter and lockdown drills are part of the discussion. Nirvi Shah (2013) reported that one school was so out of compliance in 2013 that it was required to conduct eight drills in one day. Now that is frightening! Not surprisingly, following Sandy Hook in 2012 and the tornado tragedies

in 2013, states are instituting new or additional laws requiring that drills or simulations begin earlier in the year, and that more active shooter, intruder, lockdown, and tornado drills occur.

- Crises are so complicated that having only one plan for a particular situation may not be sufficient. For example, on 9/11 part of the planned evacuation zone for some schools in the vicinity of the World Trade Center was "ground zero" (National School Safety Center, 2010). During the 2013 tornado in Moore, Oklahoma, the safe room did not prevent the tragedy. On the spot decisions may entail deviating from the original plan.

- A question first raised following Columbine and 9/11 and being raised again is, "How far must schools go to create a safe and welcoming environment without turning our nation's schools into armed camps" (National School Safety Center, 2010)? It is a complicated question to answer, even more so when one considers that during the 2009–2010 school year armed security staff were already in about 28 percent of U.S. schools, more than 50 percent in middle schools and 60 percent in high schools (Wieder, 2013). School leaders need to consider where they stand on this question and be prepared to discuss it with the district administration team, teachers, students, parents, and the community.

- Schools should not overpromise what they can guarantee about safety to their communities. Although "students are 99 times more likely to be victimized in the community," parents expect their schools to be 100 percent safe (National School Safety Center, 2010). Principals need to let parents know about the preventive measures being taken, announce drills and simulations in newsletters and during parent events, and ask parents to let their children know that they must take the drills very seriously. Posting crisis management plans on district and school websites and sharing information with community partners should also occur so the whole community takes an interest in school safety.

A FINAL OBSERVATION REGARDING SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

When considering the classroom, school site, community, and support service management responsibilities of the principal, it is interesting that the responsibilities seem to move from the inside of the school (the classroom) to the outside world (support services). The classroom, school site, community, and support services are linked, and the principal's ability to successfully take advantage of this linkage depend on his or her ability to see the linkage as based on relationships among people, not simply as structural entities that need to remain in communication with one another. Clearly, instructional leadership and management go hand in hand.

REFLECTIONS

This space provides a place for you to write down ideas that have been generated by this chapter, things you want to try, or adaptations of ideas presented here.

1. Separately, consider several characteristics of effective leaders and of effective managers. What conclusions can you draw about management or leadership from your selected characteristics?
2. Develop a key area checklist for LLBWA at your school.
3. Make a list of various types of crises that should be addressed in your school's crisis management plan. Are there some generic planning elements that would apply to most crises on your list? If so, what are these elements?
4. Explore and select online resources that would complement or enhance your crisis management plan.
5. Review a couple of school crisis management plans outside of your state, are there salient differences? If yes, consider why.
6. What insights or new questions do you have as a result of reflecting on the ideas presented in this chapter?

Leader as Shaper of School Culture

Culture either makes or breaks efforts to promote school success. As a veteran principal, new to a school, it influences my behavior and I work with staff colleagues to influence it!

—A principal's voice

School culture matters. Lasting school improvement efforts can always be traced to positive, collaborative, learning focused changes in the culture of the school. Relationships among professional colleagues in such schools are characterized by trust. There is "increasing evidence from both private and public organizations that organizations with stronger cultures are more adaptable, have higher member motivation and commitment, are more cooperative and better able to resolve conflicts, have greater capacity for innovation and are more effective in achieving their goals" (Seashore Louis and Wahlstrom, 2011, p. 52). Deal and Peterson (1999) write, "The culture of an enterprise plays the dominant role in exemplary performance" (p. 1). In the business world, culture is inextricably tied to financial results. We now know that culture is a profound predictor of success in schools. While the classroom teacher is the most powerful influence on student achievement, school culture is the next most influential factor. Furthermore, there are specific elements of culture that have a direct link to staff and student learning. The pages that follow present a definition of culture, examine how it influences daily practices,

and explore its significance with respect to powerful leverage points for producing positive school change. Effective school leaders have the ability to promote learning focused, collaborative cultures that produce success. This chapter offers specific suggestions regarding how to develop, enrich, and sustain school cultures so that all members of the school community can achieve this success, learning and thriving in the process. It offers the bridge—from research to practice.

DEFINING CULTURE

As cited by Deal and Peterson in *Shaping School Culture* (2009, pp. 5–7), the concept of culture is certainly not new. Willard Waller wrote about it in 1932! Many definitions of culture exist:

"The web of significance in which we are all suspended"

—Geertz (1973)

"The way we do things around here"

—Bower (1966)

"The pattern of basic assumptions—invented, discovered, or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with problems . . . that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems"

—Schein (1985, p. 9)

"A subtle spirit that can be sensed the moment one walks into a school"

—California School Leadership Academy

We define school culture as the practices that stem from a set of core values and beliefs influencing norms, interactions, operating procedures, reward structures, celebrations, physical environment, written and unwritten rules, expectations, perceptions, and relationships. Culture is steeped in history and tradition. It is carried on by organizational members who convey the essence of the culture in their actions and interactions. Often it is communicated through story. The culture of the school carries deep meaning for its members. It influences daily life in the school—conversations, teaching practices, meetings, supervisory actions, hiring procedures, professional development, and student achievement. Even if a school is new, its members have come. It is essential that members of new organizations take time to explicitly describe the values and attributes of the ideal culture they would like to create in the new organization.

While the concept of culture is not new, what is new about culture is that specific cultural practices have been identified as having transformative

power in achieving results. Culture is the meaning that individuals create in their world of work. Deal and Peterson (1993) remind us that "the inner, unspoken set of values and purposes that weave quality into the daily routine and motivate everyone to do his or her best" is equally if not more powerful in moving a school toward achieving a vision of quality. Because the way people interact daily or "do business" at a site dramatically influences its ultimate productivity for all members, culture is a powerful school improvement tool. For example, at Parkside Middle School in Prince William County, Virginia, the administrative team started a tradition that now influences interactions in every meeting that is conducted. At the end of each meeting, someone is assigned to ask the question, "What have we decided or done today to make the lives of Parkside students better?" A "backup person" is also assigned in case the question asker is absent. This simple tradition reminds everyone in the culture about the core value embedded in the vision of the school—our purpose here is to serve every student so that each one thrives. Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee (2002) explain, "When people feel good, they work at their best" (p. 14). It is not surprising that if a culture is a negative or toxic one, it can serve as a hindering force to school improvement efforts. The pervasive influence of culture can also serve to protect a school from willy-nilly responses to passing fads. Because each element of culture has a potential to positively or negatively influence new practices, if any school improvement effort or federally, state, or locally mandated initiative is to be implemented well, the culture of the organization must first be studied to assess which cultural elements would support the implementation process, and which may need to be transformed.

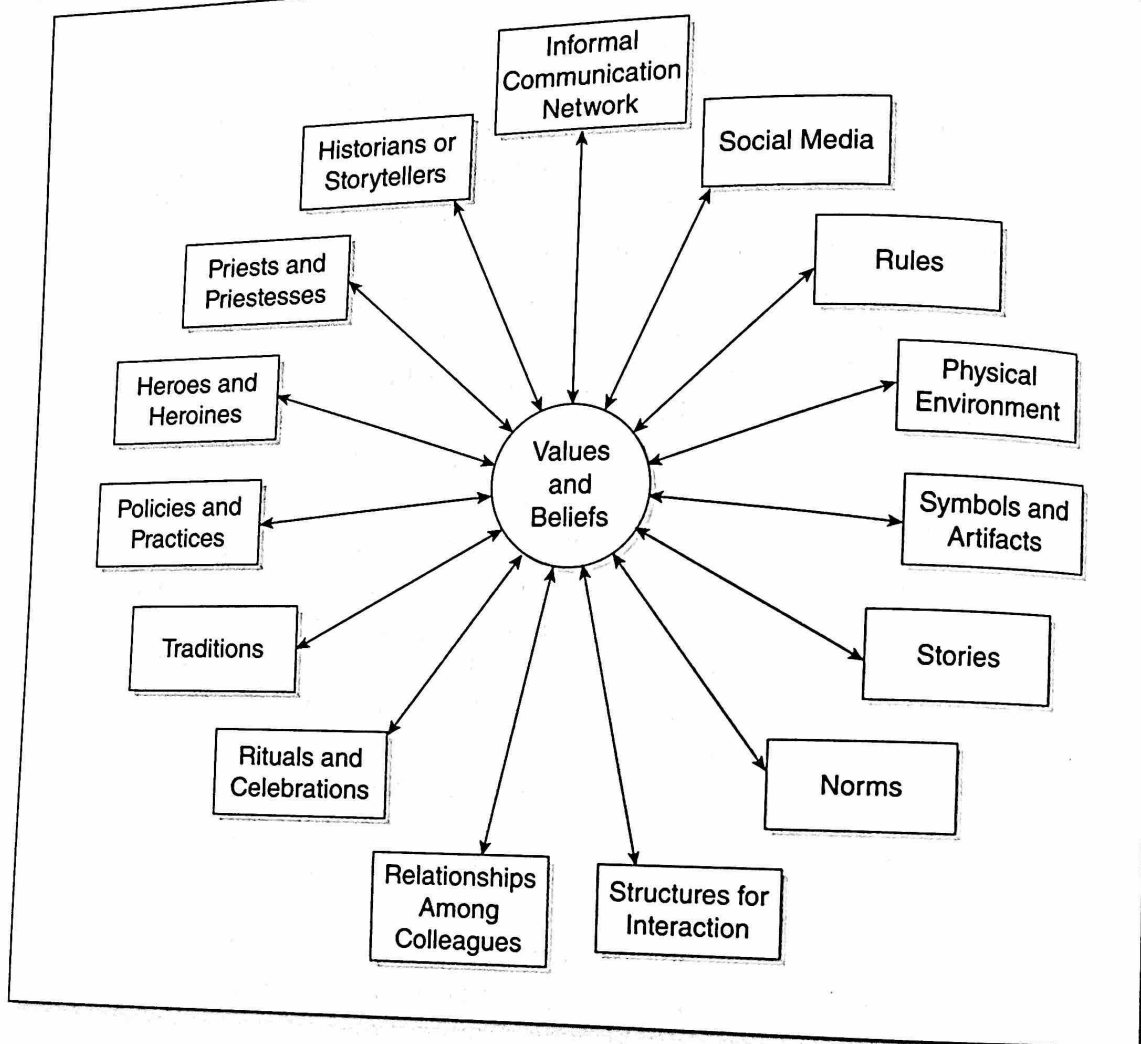
Figure 3.1 illustrates the interactive elements of school culture. Each element is dynamic in nature; that is, it influences the current culture and is sensitive to competing elements that may threaten its existence and reshape the culture. If the culture is cohesive, all of the elements should reflect treasured core values and beliefs. In studying the elements in this figure, the leadership in one company realized that their "employee of the month" parking place award was inconsistent with the value they placed on teamwork. The CEO reflected, "Our reward structure is unraveling the very value of teamwork we are trying to instill in our employees." As a consequence of realizing this, the award was modified so that enough parking spaces were allocated for an entire team.

There are four types of culture in which these elements are found (Robbins & Alvy, 2004, pp. 24–29):

- Positive
- Negative
- Toxic
- Fragmented

In positive cultures, there is a pervasive climate of positivity. Staff members display an eagerness to do whatever it takes to serve students and to support one another as professional colleagues. The elements in

Figure 3.1 Interactive Elements of School Culture



these school cultures are positive in nature. For instance, the norms and celebrations reflect values of "going the extra mile" and taking responsibility for every student.

In negative cultures, the elements convey teacher-centered practices rather than practices that support students. In these cultures, there are traditions such as the most tenured staff are assigned to the highest achieving students. The emphasis is on "if you put your time in, you will be rewarded." Staff members in negative cultures tend to do the bare minimum. A teacher from a negative culture explained it this way, "I do just good enough to get by, and not bad enough to be noticed. When 3:30 rolls around, I beat the buses out of the parking lot."

In toxic cultures, the elements often "poison" the environment. There are traditions of student bashing, staff bashing, parent bashing, or community bashing. The rumor mill "spilleth over" with toxic stories, defeated attitudes, and hopelessness. In these cultures, organizational members often feel smothered by doom and gloom. Energy is sapped by people who serve as toxic waste dispensers or "negaholics" (Carter-Scott, 1991; Peterson & Deal, 2009).

Fragmented cultures are made up of a variety of subcultures that can be positive, negative, or toxic. The physical environment usually conveys mixed messages. To illustrate, in one Pennsylvania high school, above a classroom door was a photo of a rainbow with the caption "Follow your dreams." Across the hall was a picture of an angry man pointing his finger with a caption warning, "Because I said so!" These physical artifacts portrayed the sense of fragmentation, as did the mix of interactions, celebrations, and traditions—some negative, some positive, and some toxic.

Of the four types of culture, each with their corresponding elements, the most difficult and time consuming to work with are the toxic and fragmented ones.

The sections that follow detail how the elements of culture can each serve as tools for transforming schools into positive, collaborative, learning-focused contexts. These elements can also be used to reinforce or enhance cultures where positive transformations have already occurred.

CORE VALUES AND BELIEFS ARE THE HEART OF CULTURE

A company can grow big without losing the passion and personality that built it, but only if it's driven not by profits but by values and by people. . . . The key is heart. . . . If you pour your heart into your work, or into any worthy enterprise, you can achieve dreams others may think impossible.

—Howard Schultz, CEO of Starbucks,
in Schultz and Yang (1997, p. 8)

Hattie (2012b) asserts that "the culture of the school is the essence of sustained success" (p. 170). At the core of every school culture is a set of treasured values and beliefs. These values and beliefs dramatically affect the behaviors of organizational members and ultimately, results. Values and beliefs serve as leverage points for change. For example, Hattie (2012b) described a large high school on a change journey. The principal took two to three years to build a climate of collegiality and trust, as well as create core values and beliefs that focused on student learning and improving every student in the school. The principal "provided a school-based reporting engine to help teachers keep track of their effects on individual students, provided resources to help teachers build graphs of the individual trajectories of all students . . . [he] created time for teachers to meet to prepare common assessments and then monitor their individual effects on students. This led to rich conversations . . . and the school is now renowned for the quality of evidence about its success in raising achievement" (p. 176). Hattie observed, "If there had been one whiff of accountability, the mood would have turned counterproductive" (p. 176). Taking the time to build the belief that emphasized the value of examining the impact of one's teaching practice on student learning, and using that data

to monitor and adjust instructional strategies led to significant gains in student learning. This example illustrates the critical importance of aligning improvement efforts with core values and beliefs. If such alignment does not exist, it is essential to focus efforts on developing the requisite values and beliefs so that the change process will meet with less resistance. Elmore (2004) asserts that school leaders are responsible for cultural changes in schools. He points out that school leaders do not change schools by mandate, but rather by specific displacement of existing norms, structures, and processes by others—"the process of cultural change depends fundamentally on modeling the new values and behaviors that you expect to displace the existing ones" (p. 11).

Abundant research (Barber & Mourshed, 2009; Hattie, 2009; Odden & Archibald, 2009) suggests that when core values and beliefs focus on shared leadership, in which all members of the school community possess collective responsibility for student learning, higher levels of student achievement result. In collaborative, learning-focused cultures such values and beliefs flourish. They drive the creation of structures to examine student performance, schedules that maximize time for planning, problem solving, tutoring, and forums that herald the rich resources afforded by the unique perspectives and knowledge individual educators collectively amass.

THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT REFLECTS CORE VALUES: PORTRAITS OF PRACTICE

In cohesive cultures, core values are reflected in the physical environment and interwoven with other cultural elements. Chime Charter Middle School (CCMS), for example, was founded with a vision to honor diversity and inclusion. At this urban middle school, located in the Los Angeles Unified School District, creating and sustaining a positive school climate was the number-one priority. The staff implemented three practical sets of strategies: environmental, interpersonal, and instructional (Murawski, Lockwood, Khalili, & Johnston, 2009/2010). As a consequence of these strategies, there was a decrease in bullying and an increase in positive behaviors visibly evident throughout the school.

Environmental strategies included the creation of *signs* that reflected a core value of promoting a safe environment. Members of the student council and school leadership committee made, posted, and enforced the signs. A typical sign read, "This is a violence-free, abuse-free, bully-free school. Please show kindness and respect in your words and actions" (p. 75).

In terms of interpersonal strategies, at the secondary level, *Lunch Clubs* were initiated by faculty to create opportunities for students to have choices for social interaction without losing class time. Students could choose a different activity every day! Choices included dance, karaoke, movies, origami, and art. Two additional options, *Friendship Circle* and *The Art of Giving*, were added to reinforce the school's vision of inclusion.

These options emphasized the principle of accepting others; positive friendships blossomed in these structured sessions.

Tolerance activities were also implemented. To reduce teasing, harassment, name-calling, and social isolation, an annual event called "No Name-Calling Week" was scheduled. Faculty used literature to communicate with students about how harmful name-calling directed at race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or mental ability can be to students. They presented lessons from a website called www.nonamecalling.week.org. Of course the goal is to promote no name-calling throughout the year.

Instructionally, students at this school experienced the positive core values of the culture through messages communicated by the physical environment and reiterated by classroom curriculum experiences; speakers from diverse cultures; video discussion; staff modeling; and partnerships among the school, parents, and the larger community.

Kent Peterson and Terry Deal once told a group of new leaders at the Vanderbilt Principals' Academy, "The walls talk." In inclusive schools all students work is posted. Student work is celebrated and prominent on walls; in display cases; and on shelves in the office, library, and auditorium. The nature of the work reflects core values. In one school, an entire department conducted special projects about the value of diversity. Student writing, artwork, and photography adorned the common areas throughout the school. In addition, photos and displays from elective classes such as robotics, firefighting, health sciences, and music capture the attention of those who walk through the school. Anyone who spent time in this physical environment could clearly perceive what the core values of the school were.

One school in Israel displayed a bulletin board depicting a vineyard in the entry hall. Interspersed with the vines was every student's name. This symbolically communicated the importance of each student as well as their connection to each other and the learning community. Reflecting on the messages communicated by the physical environment, a principal commented, "You can tell what's important in a school by what you see when you walk in the front door. What's on the walls, what's in the trophy case, sends a strong message to all who enter the building."

In a culture that values learning, relationships, and quality, there are visible places in the building, where staff members spend time, that reflect these values. The teachers' workroom is one such example. A key aspect of this space at one elementary school is a professional library that includes current journals, books, notices about professional development, DVDs, computers, and a binder of helpful websites. It is a setting where ideas are exchanged and books, articles, lessons, and podcasts are discussed. Teachers find resources there to develop curriculum materials, plan instruction, or assess the impact of curriculum and instruction on students. The dialogue among colleagues often includes exchanges about useful blogs and other online resources. Activities are also in place to remind organizational members of the importance of learning, collaboration, and quality, and to provide avenues for such ends. Examples of this

include a schedule for peer coaching or a time when, on a schoolwide basis, everyone reflects through journal writing, article exchanges, or book clubs.

At break times and lunch, professional colleagues often meet in this room to problem solve difficult situations related to student learning, plan units across the curriculum, discuss "test-prep" ideas, or swap stories about successful practice. Hanging on one wall is a sign that says "Help Wanted." Under the sign are several manila envelopes teachers have hung, each with visible requests written on the front. One reads, "Help Wanted! I have a ninth-grade student with fourth-grade reading skills in my class. Any ideas how to help this student develop skills, independence, and keep up with the pace of class?" Next to the envelopes are cups with pens and pencils and a shelf with index cards on which to write ideas. Teachers can often be seen writing ideas on the cards and placing them in the envelopes, as well as reaching into the envelopes and reading cards that others have written. One teacher commented, "This is the way we informally support each other, learn from one another, and improve the quality of learning for our students!"

RITUALS DISPLAY CORE VALUES AND CALL ATTENTION TO WHAT IS IMPORTANT

A ritual is defined as "any practice or pattern of behavior regularly performed in a set manner" (dictionary.reference.com, n.d.). Rituals embed purpose and meaning in the cultural fabric of the school. Formal and informal rituals exist throughout schools and organizations. They reflect cherished values and focus the attention of organizational members on what is important. A principal reflected, "We've created an informal ritual here of all staff members, taking turns of course, greeting the students as they get off the bus. We believe it's a powerful way to connect with students and for many kids it may be the first smile they see that day!"

In a large urban high school, staff members and students have articulated the value of staying physically fit. There is a ritual at this school of students walking the hallway in a clockwise manner five minutes before they go to their first period class. The music to which they walk is chosen by students (and okayed by class advisors). This ritual has had the added value of reducing tardies. Students revel with this structured opportunity for social interaction. Staff members supervise the halls and connect with students during this daily ritual.

Another familiar ritual is the faculty meeting. In a culture that values learning from one another, a faculty meeting can become a forum for learning. Meetings can be organized to have teachers share ideas that are working in their classrooms. For example, teachers who are experiencing success with implementing Common Core, differentiating instruction, or publishing student work can show samples and lead a discussion on their experiences. If an atmosphere of trust exists, ideas that were not successful can also be shared. The principal can share successes and failures.

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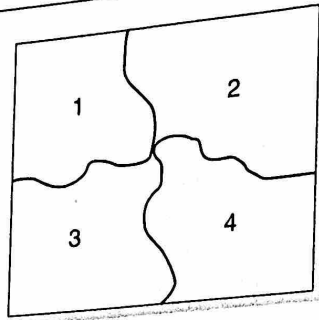
This promotes the idea of leader as learner. How can one learn without making mistakes and taking risks? A CEO of a large corporation once stated, "Failure is the opportunity to begin again more intelligently." To promote this idea, the principal encourages teachers to try lessons that are experimental and demonstrates his or her support.

Another faculty meeting or professional development activity that can be used to foster learning and model a classroom instructional strategy is the jigsaw strategy. For example, in reviewing schoolwide test data, one leadership team analyzed that an achievement gap existed for several groups of students. The team planned a faculty meeting that would promote staff understanding of what an achievement gap is and provide practical strategies to close the gap. The meeting opened with the presentation of school-level data that revealed an achievement gap. The leadership team explained that in today's meeting a powerful cooperative learning strategy called a jigsaw would be used to convey the content of four articles on closing the achievement gap. Staff members formed "home groups." In each group, individuals counted off from one through four. "Ones" would read the first article, "twos" the second article, and so on (see Figure 3.2a). Following this, staff members who shared the same number met to become "expert" in the content of the article they read. This involved discussing key points, identifying helpful examples, and deciding how they would teach others what they read (see Figure 3.2b). Finally, home groups reconvened, and each member explained to the others what he or she had read (see Figure 3.2c) and the implications for their own teaching practices.

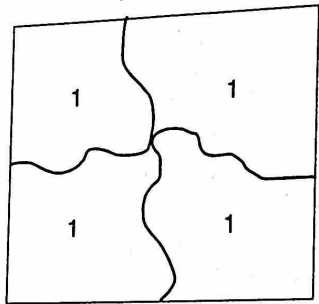
At the conclusion of the teaching episodes, groups synthesized their collective learnings and reported out to the total group. The principal functioned as a group member during the entire jigsaw process. The culminating task was one in which the jigsaw participants drafted a list of recommendations for how they would proceed in taking action to "close the gap" in the school.

Many principals use the jigsaw technique with different types of content. For instance, at the beginning of the year, some use it to review information contained in the faculty or school handbook. Others use it to share articles about implementing new initiatives for working with special education students and at-risk students, effective teaching practices, or strategies to develop common assessments. The strategy celebrates individual accountability and fosters collaboration and interdependence among faculty members. These attributes reflect the values that are being developed, celebrated, and reinforced in the culture. Another technique that calls attention to learning together is the "listening posts" activity. The faculty meeting facilitator asks group members to generate possible topics for discussion, such as differentiated instruction, working with English language learners, developing rubrics, and homework. Topics for discussion are then posted on chart paper in different locations of the room. Individuals gather around topics of interest and have a 15- to 20-minute discussion at these "listening posts." Each group's ideas are recorded on butcher paper posted around the room. These ideas are often

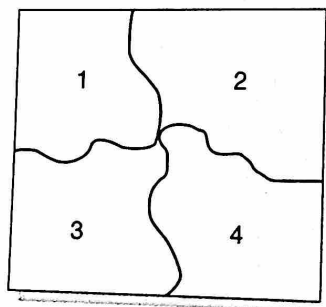
Figure 32 Jigsaw Activity



"Expert Group"



"Home Group"



"Expert Group"

a. Each reads his or her assigned article, highlighting key points.

b. Number-alike groups meet to discuss key points and to decide how to share the article's content with fellow members.

c. Each group member summarizes what he or she said.

word-processed or images are captured with an iPad and later distributed to the faculty. Following the discussion, each group prepares a two-minute summary of its conversation and reports out. Many times the "reporting out" phase plants seeds of interest among other faculty members. A variation of this activity is the use of classrooms instead of areas of the room as listening posts. This has the added value of getting faculty members into classrooms other than their own. Strategically, it is important for staff members to examine how "listening posts" might also be used in the classroom to build readiness for topics about to be taught, extend, refine, or review content and provide practice in summarizing and public speaking. The brown-bag lunch is another learning ritual. One high school staff member who attended several cooperative learning workshops shared her experiences with interested staff during lunch. Teachers followed up these sessions by experimenting with cooperative learning techniques in

their classrooms. At the final session, teachers decided they wanted to support one another in their cooperative learning activities. As a consequence, they continued meeting once a month at lunch to exchange ideas. The principal supported this activity by publicizing the meetings and providing logistical support and refreshments. At another school, teachers held brown-bag lunches to discuss how they could use their Smart Boards as an interactive, integrated curriculum tool as they implemented Common Core State Standards.

CELEBRATIONS CALL ATTENTION TO WHAT IS IMPORTANT

In positive, learning-focused, collaborative cultures, learning is valued and celebrated publicly. At many schools, student recognition assemblies are held every six to eight weeks to celebrate student successes. Celebrations need to be strategically planned to reflect cherished core values. For example, in one school students are cited for helping out a new classmate, citizenship, improving attendance, making significant academic improvement, or teaching another student. Groups of students are complimented for excellent behavior in the cafeteria or keeping the campus clean. Whatever is celebrated reflects what is being emphasized in the culture. Following a recognition assembly, the principal sends notes home to parents, informing them of their child's accomplishments. The recognition program reflects the culture's values to parents and community members, as well as reinforces the values for organizational members. For example, if the school culture places value on teamwork, it is important to recognize teams or groups of students rather than a "student of the month."

Celebrations put the school's values on display. At one school, Martin Luther King Day was celebrated by faculty, parents, and students. First, a YouTube video excerpt from King's "I Have a Dream" speech was played and the principal and leadership team gave a presentation about what Martin Luther King Jr. stood for, emphasizing values such as the love of fellow human beings, nonviolence, and equal opportunity. Next, they pointed out how these same values were shared by the school and cited specific examples to which students could relate. As an example, the principal asked the students how they would feel if, because of their hair color, they had to use separate drinking fountains, restrooms, and cafeterias. Finally, students and faculty sang songs such as "Lift Every Voice and Sing" and "We Shall Overcome." The assembly provided some insight into what it was like to live through the 1960s. When the ceremony was over, many participants had tears in their eyes. One teacher remarked, "As a school, we're closer now, and have a feeling of what we're all about."

In the wake of September 11, one high school had an assembly around the themes of developing tolerance and acceptance, and valuing diversity. It is essential that all programs—even holiday programs—have meaning, are inclusive, and reflect the core values of the school. A valuable assessment is

to make a list of the current celebrations at a school and then analyze those celebrations to determine which values they highlight. Then consider, are there any values not celebrated that should be?

HOW PEOPLE SPEND TIME REFLECTS CORE VALUES

In *It's Not Us Against Them* (2009), Ray McNulty characterizes Brockton (MA) High School as having a school culture that "centers on positive relationships" and where "students consider the school a safe haven." Brockton High serves a community that struggles with poverty, gangs, and drugs. Yet it is "the state's highest performing urban school" (p. 38). McNulty notes, "On any given afternoon, you find students throughout the building after classes have ended for the day, which is hardly surprising when you consider that about 3,500 of the school's 4,350 students participate in extracurricular activities" (p. 191). The afterschool presence of students is the norm, and students are often seen interacting with teachers and administrators. Clearly, the quality of the students' participation is a consequence of the relationships within the school. The relationships and sense of purpose students perceive dramatically influences how they choose to spend time. As Maya Angelou (2013) once said, "People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

Schedules also reflect core values and how time is spent. One middle school's staff saw the value of providing an integrated course of study for its students. As a result, the schedule was reorganized so that teachers had 74 minutes of common planning time to develop rich learning experiences for students.

Many schools organize charity drives or send middle or high school students out to volunteer in the community for service credit; this sends a clear message that the school is concerned about others. Such activities also teach about empathy and develop a valuing of community service. The December holiday season is an excellent time to have a food, clothing, or toy drive for those in need. Student government can help organize these events, assisted by faculty advisors so that it becomes a collaborative enterprise among students and adults.

History reminds people about what an organization has stood for over time. On the 40th anniversary of the American Embassy School (AES) in New Delhi, India, a teacher received a stipend to write a history of the school. This went a long way toward building the idea of tradition. The middle school buried a time capsule with a video of the school and samples of schoolwork. The elementary school student council took the lead in renaming two school buildings after famous people who exemplified the values for which the school stood. In addition, the following school song was written by one of the teachers to reflect the core values, and there was a student contest to select the title:

The World of AES

To the city of New Delhi
We come from far and wide
Boys and girls of every nation
Standing side by side
In the beauty of the gardens
We learn to take good care
Of ourselves and of each other
And this world that we all share
At AES, AES the finest school we know
Where the boys and girls and grown-ups
All really like to show
That we're smart and "green" and friendly
And we lend a helping hand
In this very special school
In a very special land
Each day we try our very best
In everything we do
The school is like a sailing ship
And we are all the crew
We work and play together
As we sail upon the sea
There's no other place in India
That we would rather be than . . .

—by the students and faculty of AES, led by Marilyn Ferguson

NORMS ARE THE UNWRITTEN RULES OF CULTURE

Generally, individuals within an organization behave toward one another according to the expectations they perceive to exist within the culture. These group expectations are usually a function of an unwritten code for behavior called norms—or, as Terry Deal said, "the way we do things around here" (personal communication, 1989).

In some schools, for example, there are norms that encourage people to voice their opinions, even if those opinions go against the grain of the

majority voice. As a teacher from Maine explained, "At our school, everyone has a right to disagree. No one must voice his or her opinion. But, if you don't take responsibility for voicing your opinion and a decision is made by the rest of the staff, you must agree not to stand in the way of the wheels of progress." In schools where this type of norm is strong, individuals who risk offering an opposing viewpoint have often become celebrated as heroes because they make others think about their attitudes and actions. One teacher noted, "At our school, we can always count on Andy. He has his feet planted firmly in concrete. . . but he reminds us, who often have our heads in the clouds, of brass tacks reality!"

When norms at a school encourage prospecting for internal resources, the activities reflect that stance. Peer-coaching programs are an example. At one school, a peer-coaching program has been operating successfully for three years. To keep the project going, teachers formed mixed newcomer and veteran groups. There are strong norms within this culture that emphasize the importance of teaching and learning from one another. When practices such as peer coaching support collegiality and cooperation in this way, they become embedded in the fabric of school life.

When new information or learning opportunities are needed in collaborative cultures, the norm has often become "Let's look within our own rich reservoir of talent to see what we might tap." When one school's professional development committee surveyed the teachers about what they were most interested in, it came to light that increasing rigor and improving questioning techniques was a major area of interest. The teachers organized some of the homegrown talent to put on a staff workshop. Topics such as developing questions, activities, and assessments based on Bloom's taxonomy, Socratic seminars, and using wait time became a schoolwide focus as a result of the workshop.

Sometimes new norms are needed to replace toxic ones. At one school, at the beginning of the year, an assistant principal found a stack of negative referrals, six inches high, on the desk of his predecessor. He reflected on the need to focus on positive as opposed to negative behavior. The assistant principal shared with staff members that if they referred a student to the office for misbehavior, he wanted them to refer that same student to his office for positive behavior within six weeks. Within the semester, he and the staff could see dramatic changes in the climate and culture of the school.

In schools that operate as Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), there is a shared norm: Each staff member will do whatever it takes to help every student in the school thrive.

POWERFUL STORIES COMMUNICATE AND REINFORCE CULTURAL VALUES

Stories appeal to reason and emotion. The use of story is one way to inform and remind new and existing members of a culture about its core

values. Every school has stories that, as a matter of tradition, are passed on to new staff members. Generally, these stories signal important values or beliefs. For example, at one school, new teachers are told about a former teacher who always had special techniques for helping at-risk youth. Through the story, they learn that because the school did not at that time have a forum for staff sharing, when that teacher retired, a library of knowledge "burned." Hence that teacher left her mark on students, but not on the teaching profession. Because of this great loss, teachers at the school now take special care to make sure that quality time is set aside for professional dialogue and the sharing of ideas and practices. A ritual called "See Them Teach Before They Leave" is instituted each spring; returning faculty members are encouraged to visit classrooms of departing teachers. Following this ritual, an assembly is held at which the bronzed classroom doorknob of each departing teacher, affixed to a wooden plaque and inscribed, is presented to that teacher. The plaque inscription reads, "Thank you for opening your door and sharing your classroom secrets. You kept a library of knowledge from burning."

In addition to reminding organizational members about important values, stories can also provide a way of talking about sensitive issues with a more comfortable distance. The following story, related by a college student, could be used during a faculty meeting to remind teachers of the tremendous influence they have on students' lives beyond the academic arena—an influence that can last and alter life paths.

Katie's Story

I spent the first 14 years of my life living in what I understood to be a happy family of four. However, by the time I entered high school, the facade had begun to crumble and the profound dysfunction, substance and mental issues, and abuse poured out. My parents had an ugly divorce. As a result, my home life was troublesome and unstable. I was a living, breathing dichotomy—the outwardly successful student nominated for valedictorian, tennis captain, flautist, class president, and yet, I was simultaneously so confused and smothered by dysfunction that I quietly struggled with severe depression and bulimia. At 16, I moved out of my parents' homes and in with my best friend and her family. During this uncertain period, one of my teachers went so far as to give me the keys to her home to provide me with a backup plan and peace of mind. At 17, I was offered an incredible opportunity to leave high school a year early. While moving alone to a state I had never been to in order to participate in a dual-enrollment program at a college I had never heard of was difficult, it offered an escape from my current reality.

It is certain to say that I did not leapfrog from my dysfunctional home in New Jersey to my refuge in Virginia to my current institution in North Carolina by myself. Many kind souls helped me along the way. I have always counted several teachers among these influential people. I can recall every teacher from PreK

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through my sophomore year of college. Many of them, from my gentle, golden-hearted second- and third-grade teachers to the inspiring and supportive professors I am lucky to learn and work with at my current university, have profoundly shaped my identity.

While there are many ways in which teachers have touched my life, one of the most unlikely yet incredibly powerful connections I made was with teachers in my high school's agricultural department. Like the outstanding teachers I already knew, they helped comfort and guide me throughout this decisive period of my life. I fondly remember these teachers pulling me into our school's FFA chapter, involving me in public speaking and other competitions. I recall the first day they hooked me into the organization.

I was the only sophomore girl in an introductory natural resources class, adrift in a sea of freshman boys. I was less than thrilled with this situation. During a lecture on the deer life cycle, an off-duty ag teacher pulled me out of class a few minutes early to discuss the department's hidden plans for me.

"Katie," the teacher began in his thick southern drawl, "you are one smart cookie. There's something special about you, girl; the universe has big plans for you. But, in the meantime, the ag department wants to invite you to try out to be our public speaker at this year's state convention." A few minutes later, the other two teachers joined us to reel me in.

In retrospect, there were a number of "countable" benefits to the kindness these teachers showed me: involvement in a tight-knit organization, valuable job preparation, and fabulous resume-building opportunities. However, their actions, like the efforts of other teachers before and after them, also yielded intangible benefits, the positive effects of which even I am uncertain. This single isolated invitation would bloom into important mentoring relationships for me. Each of these teachers would spend countless hours before, after, and during school sharing pleasant and difficult conversations; laughter as well as tears; and boundless empowerment. Throughout my three years of high school; their emotional support, positive energy, engagement, and recognition of my strengths helped me focus on the silver linings of my life and the brighter future that lay ahead.

It is pleasantly ironic that, today, I find myself at Elon University, immeasurably grateful to have received a full scholarship through the Watson Odyssey Scholars program. Like many of my peers, getting here has been quite an unusual odyssey. But, these days, I am independent, happy, healthy, and absolutely flourishing. I continue to enjoy close relationships with many of the former teachers who were so influential in my life and also cultivate new relationships with current professors, several of whom are becoming mentors to me.

In recognition of those who have and who continue to help me, I dedicate a significant portion of my time to "paying it forward" by participating in tutoring and mentoring programs. Sometimes, the work can be frustrating—as a college student straddling the poverty line, I am always broke. This often leaves me unable to buy extra supplies for the children with whom I work. When this frustrates me, I recall the amazing yet budget-strangled teachers from my public school background. The importance of teachers can never be equated with the crayons of

textbooks they can or cannot buy. The most important resource they have is and has always been their engagement with students—from fostering innovative, critical thinking; laughing at a shy student's poorly timed joke; to investing love and effort into mentoring, teachers have incredible power with and responsibility to their students. I was lucky enough to have teachers who empowered me—if someone tells you that you are bright, capable, responsible, worthy, and promising, it is easier to believe that reality and to fulfill that destiny. On the other hand, it is also easy to inspire students to fail and to live negatively.

Growing up in a school district which I considered a home away from home helped me to succeed. Many teachers focus on measuring the academic impact they have on students' lives. However, for students like me, in addition to the knowledge and skills these teachers imparted, it was the immeasurable, intangible ripple effects from their positive, personal dedication that launched me on a continuing odyssey marked by high expectations and hope.

In many school cultures that function as PLCs, storytelling is a regular part of every PLC meeting. When staff members share stories of student success or transformation, it reinforces the notion that professional colleagues will do whatever it takes to assure that every student succeeds! The Carnegie Corporation (2013) sponsors StoryCorps on their website. Several school leaders have shared stories from this incredible resource to promote understanding, overcome adversity, or build and celebrate commitment to the profession of teaching.

Thus far, through anecdotal examples, we have discussed a framework of interactive elements for thinking about school culture. In the pages that follow, we consider how a culture might be transformed if it is not a positive one, or if it is not aligned with a school's vision.

READING, TRANSFORMING, OR SHAPING A CULTURE

School cultures vary tremendously. Schools that have positive, cohesive, healthy cultures perform better than those with weak, unhealthy cultures. The complexity of cultural transformation or shaping can be overwhelming. Because no two cultures are alike, what worked in one culture, may not work in another.

One of the most daunting tasks of school leaders is to first read, and then shape the culture to reflect treasured core values and beliefs. This is particularly difficult if the culture is entrenched and negative or toxic.

Deal and Peterson (2009) suggest that the principal shapes a culture through a variety of means. They believe that it begins with "reading" the existing culture and then progressively moving to actions that create or reinforce core values, norms or practices, consistent with the vision of the school. Reading a culture involves listening to stories told by staff, examining

artifacts such as pictures or objects that have deep meaning for organizational members and reviewing operating procedures and communications. This "reading" is critical because, as Peterson and Deal (2002) remind us, "The past is truly never far away. People remember the past and the feelings it produces" (p. 49). Kent Peterson, speaking to a group of new and aspiring principals at a colloquium sponsored by the Association of California School Administrators cautioned, "If you don't read the culture first, it can rise up and bite you in the act!"

Examining what is celebrated, who are the informal power brokers, what the rituals are, what gets rewarded, and how time is used all provide a telling portrait of the culture of a school or organization. Prior efforts at school improvement, mandated initiatives, crises faced by the staff, traditions, and information about the former principal's leadership style also yield valuable data for constructing a profile of the existing culture. Once this information is garnered, the principal, in concert with the leadership team and staff, identify specifics related to the ideal vision of a school. In keeping with this vision, detailed plans are made to gradually transform the culture so that the rituals, rewards, routine activities, stories, and norms call attention to the values embedded in the new vision. Deal and Peterson (1990), in a series of case studies, noted that principals (and other leaders) shape culture in both formal and informal ways. They identified six major culture-shaping strategies:

1. Developing a sense of what the school should and could be
2. Recruiting and selecting staff whose values fit with the school's
3. Resolving conflicts, disputes, and problems directly as a way of shaping values
4. Communicating values and beliefs in daily routines and behaviors
5. Identifying and articulating stories that communicate shared values
6. Nurturing the traditions, ceremonies, rituals, and symbols that communicate and reinforce the school culture

What school leaders do will differ dramatically. One cultural transformation may take a year, whereas another may take five. What is essential is that the principal and leadership team hold the values and beliefs in focus as daily tasks are conducted and that these values and beliefs are articulated widely. Continuous growth and improvement must be emphasized.

Sharon Kruse and Karen Seashore Louis (2009) use the term *intensification of leadership* to describe an approach to changing the cultural conditions that affect teaching and learning. Specific cultural attributes are directly tied to student success. Thus, Kruse and Seashore Louis point out, "Improving culture is not an end in itself, but the means by which school leaders can address the goals of student progress and achievement" (p. 8). There are three features of school cultures that have been tied to student learning:

- Professional Community
- Organizational Learning
- Trust (Kruse and Seashore Louis)

One powerful leverage point for creating positive, learning focused *professional communities* is work that focuses on developing structures and processes to facilitate the sharing of successful practices, as well as mistakes, reflective dialogue, collaboration, and problem solving. Members of these professional communities take collective responsibility for all students and strongly value the expertise that each individual community member collectively brings to the community. In these communities, there are norms that “together we are better and more skillful than alone.” As one teacher leader said, “We would never dream of taking on a difficult case without consulting a trusted colleague.” Kruse and Seashore Louis (2009, p. 8) note, “The concept of *organizational learning* suggests that continuous improvement through collective engagement with new ideas will generate enhanced classroom practices and deeper understanding of how organizational improvement occurs.”

Trust among professional colleagues is closely tied to cultural change. As Bryk and Schneider (2004) and Tschannen-Moran (2004) suggest, trust among and between teachers and other groups is linked to increased student achievement. When professional colleagues perceive that trusting relationships exist, they are more likely to share successful practices and be willing to acknowledge problems of practice. There is less concern about being judged or in competition with other faculty members. School leaders set the tone for building trust by modeling trusting relationships, aligning actions with words, and following through on commitments. Trust is a powerful building block for creating and sustaining professional community and organizational learning.

An essential strategy for building positive, professional learning communities is to expand the membership of the school leadership team. This provides expanded leadership responsibilities and opportunities for teachers as well as serves as a conduit for getting information about current initiatives affecting teaching and learning out to the faculty at large. As one principal reflected, “There’s simply too much for any one person to do. Sharing leadership responsibilities builds trust among colleagues and increases ownership of initiatives. It gives momentum to our school improvement work.”

Echoing this principal, Karen Seashore Louis and Kyla Wahlstrom (2011) write, “Involving the school community is critical . . . schools need to build strong cultures in which the many tasks of transforming schools require many leaders” (p. 52).

While shared leadership is essential, organizational members will always be focused on the formal leader’s behavior. Hence, it is critical to be aware that small acts can speak volumes!

Be aware of the following:

- What you model
- How you greet people

- What you pay attention to when you visit classrooms, interact with faculty members, or students
- What's first and what's last on your meeting agendas
- How you spend time
- What you value in teachers, support personnel, classified staff
- How you use humor

The energy and vitality of the workplace climate plays a profound role in its productivity and organizational members' sense of well-being.

Shaping the Culture Through Storytelling

It is essential that the core values of the culture reflect beliefs about what is important. Often stories can be used to communicate these core values. To illustrate, in one high school the core values included the importance of considering the "whole child" and "matters of the heart." Faculty members often remarked, "Our school is a home for the heart and the mind." The following story illustrates how the core values of this school culture permeated the interactions of staff and students. The faculty reflected that it was often the high achievers or the students who got in trouble who received the most attention. Wanting to change this trend, they asked one another: "Who are the students who get ignored? Who are the students who are likely to slip through the cracks?" They decided on a plan of action. Each faculty member collected pictures of the students who often slipped through the cracks or were ignored. They published a compilation of each faculty member's students. The document was called "The Vanilla Kids." The name comes from the notion that vanilla is not as memorable a flavor as blueberry, cherry, or butter pecan. The expectation was that each faculty member was to reach out and communicate every time he or she saw a vanilla kid. "You could see a difference in the students and in the culture of the school within three weeks," one staff member reflected. Ordinary people can do extraordinary things to make a difference for students!

While the leader's behavior, leadership team behavior, team membership, rewards, celebrations, and rituals can be used to shape or transform culture, as these examples illustrate, stories provide still another valuable tool for shaping culture. As a reader, perhaps you were moved by the "vanilla kids" or Katie's story in this chapter. Certainly you have been moved by compelling stories told within your own culture. Hoar (quoted in Kouzes & Posner, 2006) asserts that "in the end it's all about the story that gives people meaning to not only what we're doing, but to what we're aspiring to achieve" (p. 63). This explains why stories are powerful tools for transforming cultures and changing behavior in organizations. After reading *It's Not Us Against Them—Creating the Schools We Need* (McNulty, 2009), a principal and leadership team, aspiring to get the entire faculty on board with respect to truly integrating technology in the learning experiences of students, presented the following excerpt from the book at a whole school planning day:

Kids long to be proud of their schools and of what they can accomplish there. But for too many learners, coming into school from the rich and dynamic world in which we live is like trekking into the desert or stepping back into history. For today's learners, the technologies introduced over the past twenty years—cell phones, iPods, [iPads], laptops, and more—have always been part of their experience. Yet rather than working to integrate these technologies seamlessly and productively in the classroom, many schools ban these items during school hours. It's as if these students are carpenters who must leave their power tools at the door and then build a large, intricate structure using hammers and handsaws.

Integrating technology into the educational experience . . . is vital. Technology already has changed the way we think and learn, work and play—indeed the ways we build and sustain relationships. The future of education isn't only sitting in the chairs in our classrooms, it's also nestled into the backpacks and back pockets of each learner. It's not good enough for us simply to acknowledge that all these technologies exist. We need to integrate them because we need to help our learners understand technology's role not just in their personal relationships, but also in their future professional success. After all, isn't adaptability an essential skill we need to model and teach to our children? Isn't the concept of adjusting to change essential for them to be successful in the 21st century? (pp. 39–40)

After sharing this excerpt, staff members worked in table groups to brainstorm ways in which technology could be integrated into daily learning experiences. Table groups posted the results of their dialogue on chart paper, then did a "wisdom walk" in which they walked around the room to view the work of other table groups. Many adults used their iPads to photograph ideas they wanted to use. One faculty member observing this reflected, "My students often use their cell phones to get assignments on the board." The excerpt from the book stimulated an awareness of the need to integrate technology and a conversation that still continues today!

Research documents the tremendous capacity of storytelling. Consider the following account from Kouzes and Posner (2006):

Stanford University organizational sociologists Joanne Martin and Melanie Powers studied the impact of stories on MBA students, an often numbers-driven, highly competitive, skeptical audience. Martin and Powers compared the persuasiveness of four methods of convincing the students that a particular company truly practiced a policy of avoiding layoffs. In one situation they used only a story to persuade people. In the second, they presented statistical data that showed that the company

had significantly less involuntary turnover than its competitors. In the third, they used the statistics and the story, and in the fourth, they used a straightforward policy statement made by an executive of the company. . . . As you probably anticipated, the most believable was number 1, the story only. The students who were given only the story believed the claim about the policy more than any of the other groups and remembered it better several months later. The executive delivering the policy statement was the least convincing. (pp. 63–64)

Kouzes and Posner's (2002) landmark book *The Leadership Challenge*, underscores the use of storytelling as a leadership tool. The authors make the following insightful points:

- It is important to "lead by storytelling" and "put storytelling on your meeting agenda" (pp. 98–100).
- "Telling great stories is one of the most effective ways leaders can model the values and beliefs essential to organizational success" (p. 381).
- "Stories aren't meant to be kept private; they're meant to be told. And because they're public, they're tailor-made for celebrations. In fact, stories are celebrations and celebrations are stories" (p. 359).
- "Well-told stories reach inside us and pull us along" (p. 383).

How can the power of storytelling shape the culture of the school-house (Alvy & Robbins, 2010a)? Consider the following scenario. In one school the principal became aware that the sixth-grade team was dysfunctional. Backbiting, bullying, and self-serving battles replaced the resource sharing, problem solving, and collaboration that benefited students whose teachers were on other teams. The principal was distressed that the human toll, in terms of student learning, would be great if the sixth-grade team members were unable to resolve their differences. In an effort to ameliorate the toxic energy that was rampant in this underperforming team, the principal shared the following story about President Abraham Lincoln:

Building a Team for the Nation's Greater Good

In 1855, Abraham Lincoln expected to be co-counsel with the well-known and respected Pennsylvania lawyer Edwin M. Stanton on the celebrated McCormick and Reaper patent case in Cincinnati, Ohio. Lincoln, with a passion for inventions and new mechanical gadgets, prepared extensively for the case and looked forward to working with Stanton. Stanton, however, viewed Lincoln "as a Western hick and snubbed him throughout the trial. . . [and] supposedly

referred to him as 'that giraffe' and that 'creature from Illinois'" (Oates, 1994, p. 103). Lincoln, always the lifetime learner, remained in the courtroom and learned much from Stanton's performance. Seven years later, on January 13, 1862, Lincoln appointed Stanton to the Secretary of War cabinet position. Stanton was

Astonished that Lincoln had appointed him Secretary of War. After all, Stanton had humiliated Lincoln back in the McCormick Reaper case. And in Washington this past year, Stanton had vilified this "imbecilic" President, this "original gorilla." . . . But Lincoln made it clear that he bore Stanton no ill will. If the McCormick Reaper episode had been one of the most humiliating episodes of his life, Lincoln had put that aside now. He never carried a grudge, he said later, because it didn't pay. (p. 278)

Stanton's appointment was but another example of Lincoln's greatness; he did not let petty differences serve as obstacles to the greater good. As the nation's leader, Lincoln's objective was to fill the cabinet with those most able to carry out the national purpose: to serve as a democracy of, by, and for the people. In *Team of Rivals*, Doris Kearns Goodwin (2005) observes that "Lincoln's choice of Stanton would reveal. . . a singular ability to transcend personal vendetta, humiliation, or bitterness. As for Stanton . . . he would . . . come to respect and love Lincoln more than any person outside of his immediate family" (p. 175). When Lincoln died on April 15, 1865, at 7:22 a.m., it was Stanton who stated the immortal words, "Now he belongs to the ages" (p. 743).

In this example, the principal drew on a period of national crisis as a tool to resolve petty differences for the greater good: student learning.

FINAL THOUGHTS ON CULTURE

One principal noted, "Culture is really the stage on which leadership gets played out. If, for example, the shared vision for a school is to be a 21st century 'home' for the heart and mind, one has to ask, 'To bring this to reality, what will it take? What will be in the halls, on the walls, in the trophy case? What will the stories be like that are told to newcomers? What will be the traditions, celebrations? Who will be on the leadership team?' And, what's more, as a principal I always have to be aware of how my behavior—what I attend to, put last on my priority list, what I participate in, what I don't—shapes the culture of the school." As Kent Peterson once reflected, "Probably one of the most important things a leader does is to create, shape, and manage culture." The ideal school culture is positive, learning focused, cohesive, and dedicated to helping every student thrive. The collaborative learning-focused school will be explored further in Chapter 11.

REFLECTIONS

This space provides a place for you to write down ideas that have been generated by this chapter, things you want to try, or adaptations of ideas presented here.

1. Reflect on the school culture in your organization. What are the core values and beliefs? How are they depicted in traditional ceremonies, rituals, reward structures, artifacts, and stories? Are they consistent with the vision of the school? Why or why not?
2. Are there traditions or rituals in your school that are contrary to the values of the school? If so, why do you think this is the case? How might you transform them if need be?
3. Identify key behind-the-scenes staff members who play a major part in school culture. What parts do they play?
4. What are the stories that are told in your school? How do these stories shape the behavior of organizational members?
5. What insights or new questions do you have as a result of reflecting on the ideas presented in this chapter?