

### **The Leading Way of Changing Meaning**

*Sandra Sytsma*

Post Pressed

2007

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There are various definitions for leadership, and depending on the particular sector in which leadership is found, appropriate definitions can be dramatically different from one another. What appears to be a constant both within and between sectors, with mass schooling as the sector of greatest interest in this discussion, is the inevitability of change. Sytsma's (2007) qualitative, empirically oriented book *The Leading Way of Changing Meaning* investigates the phenomenon of leading in one of its important aspects – that of inspiring changing meaning. In fact, the notion of transformative leadership is advanced in this study by investigating the claims that leading is what inspires changing meaning in both intra- and interpersonal ways.

A purposeful sample of five (two male and three female) self-nominated leaders in education, all white middle class, experienced educators in mid-career, engaged in an approximate one year-long journey of inner exploration through a closed group dialogical encounter supported by e-mail list serve correspondence. The researcher, and author of the book, assumed the role of participant observer within the dialogue group and loosely framed the nature and intent of the study for other participants who demonstrated both an interest in the study, *per se*, and an opportunity to experience a space of safety and creativity in exploring their personal and professional challenges with leadership and meaning-making. This is especially critical as those challenges related to the bureaucratic, structured, hurried and often-times impersonal nature of PK-12 education.

In many respects, the five self-nominated leaders who engaged as participants in this study were invited and encouraged to be researchers themselves, searching and re-searching the nature of educational leadership as it relates to both external, systemic change and internal, personal change. Meaning was made by a commitment to reflective practice – engaging deeply in the research as practitioners committed to reflexivity and collective critical support in their own development by continuously articulating a vision of correspondence, harmony and holism between the outer and inner life of leadership. Clearly, this kind of organized, rigorous, reflective professional practice rarely occurs for those who lead for education, broadly speaking, and schooling in particular. Rather quite the opposite occurs. Change is mandated in structural and bureaucratic ways where conformity is expected and meaning-making is neglected.

The research study is comprised of introductory materials that give the reader a sense of the study and its purposes, a significant and expansive theoretical framework, a study design, relevant findings and implications for those who lead in any aspect

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of formal schooling. Much of Sytsma's book corresponds to one of the important aspects of contemporary educational leadership – attending to one's inner person as a leader (Speck, 1999). The multidimensional roles of cultural workers in education – irrespective of formal position or leadership role within organizational structures – demands that attention be given to the inner life of leading. Attending to one's inner person addresses the author's central concern that change, more frequently than not, forces a (p. 19) "separated nature of doing and being in education." In many respects, "the system" assumes that practitioners will move into change, framed and dictated from the outside, with confidence and certainty, when in fact this faulty assumption does not allow the very people who do the work of schooling and their varied experiences any real partnership in change. This perspective hints at research and theory pertaining to professional learning and readiness (concerns-based adoption model) and builds on a model for change in individuals (National Academy of Sciences, 2005). Change, manifested in new learning and innovation by way of external forces, without meaning-making at the level of the individual person, does not necessarily translate into valuing such change or assimilating it in any meaningful way (Cohen and Levinthal, 1990).

The tone of the study is clearly based in Eastern philosophical influences but adapts these viewpoints to the contemporary challenges of leading in schools by employing appropriate phenomenological-like methodology. Ultimately, the goal of the study was that leading (both self and others) would (p. 42) "bring on the learning of meaning and the [creation] of new meaning to prompt different leading." This goal seeks to provide a proposal for effective system change, a new reality of sorts whereby (p. 52) "the problems of outer structural change and the fiddling of external indicators, as evident in education at present" would be replaced with (p. 52) "the mindful and knowing participation of people who comprise systems [in order to] bring about more coherent processes of change."

The tripartite intersection of leading, changing and meaning, as investigated in this study, brought forth valuable insights. And although the reader senses some frustration with the concessions made by Sytsma with the academy in order to conduct this research, her analysis and reporting of qualitative data are transparent and appears to be both rigorous and trustworthy. The book provides great detail about the author's particular worldview and research biases which in turn brings clarity and perspective for the reader.

Some significant findings, as reported, include:

- participant discovery of an "interstitial space" – a trusting place to bare all, take risks and be vulnerable in making meaning together about leading, change, leading for change, and leading for change by making meaning for oneself, and as a result encouraging the same in others;
- textual themes that indicated leaders need to productively engage in processing conflict rather than avoiding or downplaying its significance;
- examination (searching and re-searching (or searching again)) of one's values and the alignment or incongruence with systemic values as necessary in order to (p. 163) "find a more meaningful meeting such that changing [can be] driven from within people rather than by a system";
- as a leader, being is just as important as doing, and (p. 176) "those who would lead must go the journey of exploring self"; and

- leadership, a right and obligation of every person, is seeing the world differently and creating new realities that lead to self and social betterment.

Rather than a clear cause and effect study, the outcomes of this investigation are more subtle and nuanced. A synergy was formed within a collegial, virtual space that revealed much about what leaders need to be to be leaders of a certain kind. Leaders need to honor their (p. 195) “inner dimension to function well in the outer domain [...] [and] a lack of such connection [to an inner dimension] [...] has been the core problem with change in education.” As Fullan (1991) has suggested, more than a decade ago, real change must occur at a personal level, and this focuses on the individual constitutes a central feature of a theory of organizational change.

Overall, the book is thought provoking, especially as it employs a juxtaposition of theoretical groundings, methodological features, and worldview orientation not commonly evidenced in formal academic research. There are continental differences in English prose that make the readability of the book, at points, a little challenging. With that said however, this reviewer highly recommends the book to researchers who are interested in dynamic forms of qualitative investigation and the use of melioration in expanding our collective knowledge within the field of education.

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### Handbook of Education Politics and Policy

*Edited by Bruce Cooper, James Cibulka and Lance Fusarelli*

Routledge

New York, NY

2008

430 pp.

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The *Handbook of Education Politics and Policy*, co-edited by Cooper *et al.* (2008), assembles a composition of stalwart scholars who present a comprehensive synthesis

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of empirical research, conceptual frameworks, judicial rulings, and policy analyses that as an integrated body of knowledge demonstrates scholarly advancements in the field while simultaneously suggesting new directions for research and policy formation. With 21 different chapters nested within one of the three themes (federal, state, and local politics of education; interest groups and institutional effects on educational politics; and the politics of equity and excellence), my objective is to frame the review around two conditions the editors argue are necessary for future scholarship on the politics of education, it must:

- (1) reflect current and emerging issues; and
- (2) generate new knowledge on the improvement of education.

### **Current and emerging political issues**

Understanding the politics of education is akin to looking through a Kaleidoscope, at first glance it is difficult to see how the various shapes and colors of a Kaleidoscope form distinct patterns. It can be too be confusing to understand how the diffuse issues confronting public schools cohere around a common theme. The editors adroitly frame the handbook chapters in a way that both preserves the complexity of educational politics but also clearly demonstrates the dynamic relationships among structural, behavioral, and ideological issues across micro- meso- and macro-boundaries. Restricting the conceptual lens to one unit of analysis could lead to misguided assumptions on the causes and consequences of political issues and policies. Illustrating the cross-boundary relationships among political issues provides a helpful heuristic to comprehend the nature and function of educational governance. This point is illustrated with three examples.

Martha McCarthy in her chapter on “Judicial impact on educational politics and policies” argues that judicial intervention in educational policy, while extensive, has only had marginal influence on actual practice. Her claims are supported by examples of school desegregation and religious influence whereby she argues other interventions were needed to realize desegregation after *Brown II*, and that school boards possess the most control over the treatment of contentious religious issues. Paul Green in his chapter on the “Politics of (de)segregation,” elucidates the social conditions underlying re-segregated school systems. He argues that residential segregation, ambivalence toward re-segregation, and educational reforms devoid of desegregation plans are contributing factors to re-segregated schools. Nathan Myers and James Cibulka in their chapter on “Religious faith and policy in public education,” capture the political influence of Christian conservatives. These three chapters show how local educational contexts are shaped by policies and practices at multiple levels.

A second example of the editors multidimensional treatment of a political issues is their Darwinian account of the changing nature and function of school boards that leaves the reader wondering if the scientific management structures of school boards will evolve into new (or perhaps return to old) governance forms. Patricia Ehrensall and Patricia First’s chapter, “Understanding school board politics: balancing public voice and professional power,” suggests that school boards are suffering from an identity crisis that threatens their future existence. Thomas Asbury’s chapter, “Hitting a moving target: how politics determines the changing role of superintendents and school board”, explains the historical roots of school boards’ identity crisis, and largely attributes the problem to superintendent-board relationships. Fritz Edelstein’s chapter, “The evolving political role of urban mayors in education,” is an omen of sorts if school boards are unable to

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ameliorate their developmental challenges. He shows how the rapidly expanding phenomenon of mayoral influence could be the beginning of the end of school boards.

Political contention surrounding market-based reform is a third example of how the editors interweave issues across different political boundaries to demonstrate how systemic forces at multiple levels converge and diverge to affect educational policies and practice. Darleen Opfer, Tamara Young, and Lance Fusarelli's chapter, "Politics of interest: interest groups and advocacy coalitions in American education," portrays the role of interest groups within the institutional ecology of public education. Janelle Scott, Christopher Lubienski, and DeBray-Pelot's chapter, "The ideological and political landscape of school choice interest groups in post-Zelman era," zooms in on the changing characteristics of coalitions for and against school choice. Bruce Cooper and John Sureay's chapter, "The collective politics of teacher unionism," examines the genetic make-up and purpose of the American Federation of Teachers and National Education Association. Gary Miron's chapter, "The shifting notion of 'publicness' in public education," details the expansion of privatized educational models (vouchers, educational management organizations, and charter schools) and the impact of this free market shift on the traditional notion that education is a public good.

### **New knowledge on the improvement of education**

The editors integrate chapters on conceptual frameworks, descriptive accounts, and research summaries to erect a strong jumping off point for future empirical studies on the changing nature of educational governance. In particular, four lines of inquiry seem to emerge from the chapters, the:

- (1) application of conceptual frameworks derived largely from political science to study state policy making and the complexity of urban educational governance;
- (2) use of contemporary adaptations of institution theory and micro-political frameworks to examine social and structural changes within schools and school systems;
- (3) interaction of the policy making process across federal, state, and local boundaries; and
- (4) mapping out of relatively unchartered political arenas.

Michael McLendon and Lora Cohen-Vogel's chapter, "Understanding education policy change in the American states: lessons from political science," situates multiple streams theory, punctuated equilibrium framework, and policy innovation and diffusion theory within the cauldron of educational policy making. These authors argue that more research on policy making and implementation processes should be couched within the above theories. Dorothy Shipp's chapter, "Urban regime theory and the reform of public schools: governance, power, and leadership," advances the use of regime theory as a useful lens to explore the enigmatic governance of urban school districts. Hanne Mawhinney's chapter, "Towards a new political leadership praxis in the rescaled space of urban educational governance," makes a parallel argument to Shipp's proposition on the utility of broad, comprehensive frameworks to understand the governance of urban districts. Mawhinney believes the interaction of myriad conditions in urban education necessitates the uses of frameworks that can account for the interrelationships among social, structural, cultural, and ideological factors.

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Understanding who or what controls public education lies at the core of every political issue. Betty Malen and Melissa Vicent Cochran's chapter, "Beyond pluralistic patterns of power: research on the micropolitics of schools," shows how even with the local control rhetoric there is still an imbalance of power and authority between principals and teachers and parents and schools. The authors argue that more research is needed on sources of conflict among school agents, attempts to devolve authority and power, and social interactions within formal and informal arenas. Jo Bennet and Janice Hansel's chapter, "Institutional agility: using the new institutionalism to guide school reform," frames the issue of control within an institutional context and argues that school reform is predicated largely on how schools respond to their environments. Malen and Cochran's chapter would suggest that schools' responses to changes in the institutional environment brought about by state and federal policies have not disrupted traditional school cultures. Perhaps, integrating both theoretical frameworks to explore the nexus of institutional control and local control can enhance capacity at the local level and within the institutional environment. These two chapters illustrate the compatibility of new institutionalism and micropolitics. In fact, Bennet and Hansel make this same argument. They write "Understanding the connection among the micro- and macro-levels is critical to making sense of the politics of educational organizations" (p. 222).

Kenneth Wong's chapter, "Federalism, equity, and accountability in education," is a foray into the federal system of public education. Wong's primary focus is on the role of federal legislation in reducing educational disparities between rich and poor school districts. Karen Febey and Karen Seashore Louis' chapter, "Political cultures in education at the state and local level: views from three states," examines federalism from the lens of state and local political ideology. They argue that the application of federal policies is largely influenced by states' political cultures. Bruce Baker and Preston Green's chapter, "Politics, empirical evidence, and policy design: the case of school finance and the costs of educational adequacy," confronts the problem of legislative efforts to bring about educational parity. As they discovered, empirical evidence lacks the level of control needed to generalize findings on finance formulas across states. A second problem is the legislative manipulation of marginal costs that can present two different funding pictures depending on the position of the legislature. Baker and Green conclude by suggesting that finance issues will become more complicated with more federal intervention.

Three chapters map out a research agenda on political arenas that have remained relatively unexplored. Catherine Marshall and Lois Andre-Bechely's chapter, "Feminism and education politics: no longer for women only," reviews scholarship from a feminist paradigm and suggests more feminist research is needed into the areas of the educational experiences of girls, the curricular treatment of gays and lesbians, and issues specific to adolescent girls (teen pregnancy and parenting and sexual harassment). Bonnie Fusarelli's chapter, "The politics of coordinated services for children: interinstitutional relations," suggests that future research on coordinated services should center on social conditions within the relational network that evolves from school-family-community partnerships. Frances Spielhagen and Elissa Brown's chapter, "Excellence versus equity: political forces in the education of gifted students," addresses a paradox of No Child Left Behind and other federal reforms. As they argue, federal policies aim to enhance performance but at the same time gifted students are being marginalized by reforms predicated on improving achievement in other student populations.

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The primary audience for the handbook appears to be as diverse as the political landscape of public education. Policy makers and educators alike can reference chapters that increase their understanding of the systemic nature of many controversial political issues, such as market-based reforms, urban school governance, mayoral intercession, and the influence of interest groups and policy entrepreneurs. If the aim of educators and policy makers is to find warrants that support their position on a particular issue, they will be disappointed by the objective nature of the handbook. On the other hand, if educators and policy makers are intent on better understanding the complexity of school governance, the handbook presents many useful lenses to view the interaction of structural, behavioral and ideological forces within the cauldron educational politics. As mentioned previously, the handbook offers a great jumping-off point for future research. Scholars of educational politics and policy benefit from the delimitation of conceptual frameworks that show promise for making sense of the complex nature of educational governance (especially in urban districts), the identification of relatively unchartered political arenas where research is lacking, and the extant evidence on the salient political issues of the day. The handbook would also be a valuable ancillary text for courses on educational policy and politics. Overall, I enthusiastically recommend the handbook for individuals who operate within the political arena of public education and scholars who study political issues in education.

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#### **Developing School-wide Programs to Prevent and Manage Problem Behaviors: A Step-by-Step Approach**

*Kathleen Lynne Lane, Jemma Robertson Kalberg and Holly Mariah Menzies*

The Guilford Press

New York, NY

2009

196 pp.

ISBN 1-60623-032-8

\$32.00

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Most teachers enter the classroom focused on well-planned instruction, hoping to inspire students to love learning. Unfortunately, these teachers find managing problem behaviors of students one of the most difficult aspects of their day, particularly when a school has a culture of low expectations for academics or when disrespect, bullying or violence is prevalent.

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*Developing School-wide Programs to Prevent and Manage Problem Behaviors: A Step-by-Step Approach* succinctly throws a lifeline to school administrators, counselors and teachers to prevent or change the misbehavior and maladaptive behaviors of the students through reasonable use of individual behavior intervention skills scaled up to address the entire student body. In seven chapters, authors (Lane *et al.*, 2009) lay a research foundation for the techniques in their book and then proceed to build a program addressing the 80 percent of students in a school who typically would not be caught up in anti-social behavior but who, if immersed in a violent or out-of-control environment might turn to antisocial behaviors themselves. The authors address poor academic performance throughout their book as a potential precursor to maladaptive behavior – students who are not succeeding academically may communicate their frustration through behaviors that are not acceptable to the school community. Students need to feel that they are in a safe, healthy, supportive environment. A total school program addressing behaviors and setting a unified culture and approach (including all staff – many of whom would have traditionally been ignored in developing any plan related to students but who are in key positions to support or damage the effectiveness of any implementation) to acceptable behaviors goes a long way to providing a school environment that provides feelings of safety not only for students but also for faculty and staff too.

Chapter 1 lays out the thesis and focus of the book. Based on a three-tiered model of a school-wide behavior supports, the three tiers are based on the severity of individual student behavior. The first tier is for the vast majority of a school community in which inappropriate behavior is not a recurring issue – this is a preventative tier. All students are monitored for academic and behavior difficulties. This tier addresses about 80 percent of the student body. Secondary prevention is designed for that 10-15 percent of students who are not responsive to preventive measures. These are students who would receive more focused attention to their academic performance, whether it is trouble learning or a refusal to participate in the learning process. The tertiary prevention tier is the most focused and intensive level of support and is directed at those who may be at risk youth due to chaotic home lives, impoverished living conditions or mental health issues of someone in the immediate environment. This chapter presents a strong research base for its presentation of the value of a school-wide behavioral plan.

Chapter 2 defines and details a primary prevention program at each level of education, recognizing the differences in working with students of different ages and grade levels. Though not a primary focus, the importance of the classroom and teacher are acknowledged here, including how the classroom structure, appropriate curriculum, and instructional delivery are linked to behavior. This chapter also includes a table of 11 existing programs, which focus on non-violence, bullying, or positive behavior that could be used to assist, not replace local thinking, in developing a plan creating a culture of positive behavior and citizenship.

By Chapter 4, the book gets to its core as it provides solid direction for designing and starting a primary prevention plan. The authors present very clear procedures to guide the process for the developing and implementation of a plan. Although, the authors include consensus building and building a team to oversee the process at times the richness of samples could also become overwhelming in all of the steps that would be conducted. More examples could have been presented about gaining community

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support to assure that the valued behaviors and plan is reflective of the community. This is especially important when the faculty is not reflective of the community that the school serves. The faculty or administration providing leadership in developing the school's plan needs to be sensitive to incorporating a broad range of stakeholders and ensuring that the curriculum is culturally responsive, developmentally appropriate, and evidence-based as advocated by the authors.

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After implementing the plan for school-wide behaviors, the subsequent chapter moves into more detail about assessing the success of the program including sample measures and ways to collect feedback on the plan. In addition, more information is given about monitoring all students for academic and behavior concerns in the primary tier as a way to prevent difficulties and identify students who are struggling. Examples of existing assessments and tools used for this screening are provided.

Chapter 6 focuses on the implementation plan, including how to collect school-wide data to monitor how the school and its students are responding to the plan, to determine how different types of students are responding, and to identify students who require additional supports in the form of secondary and tertiary interventions. The information on how to identify students who need targeted support includes examples of a variety of programs and interventions that would support struggling students. The chapter also points out the importance of the integrity of the implementation. For example, if constituents of the implementation plan do not use the plan as it is developed this can result in a different form of evaluation than if the plan is implemented as developed. Although fidelity to the plan was addressed, these reviewers believed more attention could be directed at faculty and staff behaviors that result in problematic student behaviors. In the experience of these reviewers, adults may treat children in disrespectful or culturally insensitive ways. When a student reacts, the student is held accountable while the adult is not called to task as the cause of the student's unacceptable behavior. Further attention to training faculty and staff to ensure respectful interactions with all students as well as more specialized training to understand students with emotional or behavioral disorders is recommended.

The final chapter, Chapter 7, offers a series of frequently asked questions and responses to those questions as a means to address issues that were not addressed more extensively earlier. It serves as a helpful resource for teachers and administrators utilizing the book as a guide to implement a school wide program to monitor student learning and behavior. While this book is designated for special education, the co-reviewers represent general education and special education. We were curious to see if the book would provide information that is useful to a broader group of educators. As a result, an interesting discussion ensued. The term "managing behaviors" was an issue in the separate cultures of general and special education. Although readily accepted by the special education reviewer as a routine issue in teaching, the general education reviewer had to go through a process to understand that "managing behaviors" was not necessarily an insensitive approach to improving student functioning in a social setting. Creating a culture of high expectations with a systematic approach for academics and behavior was seen as a way to ensure that all students have a safe, supportive environment in which to learn.

These two reviewers initially disagreed about the cultural sensitivity of strategies described in the book. In a city as diverse as Los Angeles, asking one parent to serve on the team that develops and monitors the behavioral plan would leave several ethnic

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constituents unrepresented. Further discussion brought out the need of general education and special education stakeholders to also be represented. The conversation about cultural sensitivity was a rich discussion of a school needing to be aware of its own needs, and to adjust the team and process for the school's individual situation. Through this discussion, both reviewers felt that *Developing School-wide Programs to Prevent and Manage Problem Behaviors: A Step-by-Step Approach* is a worthwhile read for teachers and administrators who wish to implement a systemic approach to ensuring academic success while minimizing problem behaviors. The book would especially be useful to educators in a school administration or educational leadership program.

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### 4 Core Factors for School Success

*Todd Whitaker and Jeffery Zoul*

Eye on Education

Larchmont, NY

2008

139 pp.

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\$29.95

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The push for educational reform and the many programs developed from the Governmental policy of No Child Left Behind has left many people asking the question, what would it take for school administrators and teachers to enhance the ability to teach effectively and for students to raise their own expectations for themselves academically? Many books and training guides today focus on the prevention and intervention of school failure; however, few focus on the prerequisites before the invention and never address the true essence of what it really takes for academic change in our schools. Change to some may look different than change to others; some schools throughout the USA just overhaul programs that already exist then develop around the desired requirements and expectations for students to adapt to a school environment that they never survived in initially.

With many years of experience the authors of *4 Core Factors for School Success* – Todd Whitaker and Jeffrey Zoul – began as educators in the public school system. Both were principals and understood the role as leaders and the demand that today's teachers are up against. What is also significant about the authors is the fact that they have written books that emphasize student learning and strategic understanding with school leadership. In *4 Core Factors for School Success*, Whitaker and Zoul (2008) take

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the challenge of identifying four major factors that school administrators and teachers need to consider while preparing students for real life situations after high school. Connected to the four communication, observation, relationships, and expectations (CORE) factors are specific strategies and actions for school success. The authors concentrate on learning the basic needs that all students need to obtain and all educators need to demonstrate CORE.

The book is organized around six chapters. The authors passion about their work is evident as they began elaborating on how schools should clarify their CORE principles and establish how its foundation will affect the entire system of schools academically and economically. As Todd stated from the beginning chapter, (p. 9) “people make differences, not programs”. This statement was profound since many programs are evaluated by their state academic performance index scores and what the school’s principal is implementing correctly or incorrectly. People make differences and change is the result of the CORE values in which people decide to adopt. The American Heritage (2000, p. 5) defines the word CORE as “the central, innermost or most essential part of anything.” If this statement is factual then the first element we might need to establish is that communication is one of the most validated assets that all people have in common and an essential ingredient for success in schools or in business.

The authors reiterate that strong communicators are careful observers (p. 6); we must master our skills of communication, observing, monitoring carefully, building personal, and professional relationships while establishing clear expectations for ourselves, students, and each other. If we ask educators who teach in our schools’ educational system, many of them will share that they believe in core values and think that a need to get back to the basics is critical. The authors emphasize that we must move from beliefs to behavior that produce results. These results should manifest an increase in teacher morale, student attitude and school aptitude. As an educator myself, I must understand that there are many variables of communication that support us or impair our way of thinking critically. Effective thinking and effective communication between parents and schools are mandatory and should be consistent to establish maintaining meaningful relationships if we are to conquer the myths of some that believe that education will always be a failure.

The next line of defense the author examines is observation. Reeves put it best (p. 48) – “we must observe the results we receive from data so that we adjust accordingly” (Reeves, 2006, p. 53). As I re-read the quote, it digested many insights that people have about visibility and how they interpret what they observe. The more visible educators are, the more aware they are about how the school is performing. This statement by the authors is only true if the educators are actively visible (specifically observing) and observant through their discerned eye by understanding their own CORE values. The author pushes the statement that we must be masters of observed learning focused on improving performance (p. 75). As educators we must fully understand our role as watchmen, as we carefully observe children that are not our own but are in fact our responsibility. We must not only observe teachers, students and parents but also notice how the school culture changes as schools engage in positive interactions through understanding that CORE values are needed for effective change as the next generations takes its place.

In the next section, the authors elaborate on relationships and assert that relationships are vital for establishing and activating any vision that educators implement.

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The authors reiterate (p. 77) “it is the relationship we cultivate and maintain among the people in our schools that make a significant impact on student/teacher performance.” We must be grounded in trust and mental respect. As I have visited many schools throughout the USA and have been employed by school districts and mental health facilities, I asked the question, what is a relationship? It is trust. The book reveals four vital signs of trust: respect, personal regard, and competence in core role responsibilities and personal integrity (Bryk and Schneider, 2002). Consequently, it begs the question, how do teachers transfer that trust towards their students? The authors provide points to think about when examining that specific question. The first antidote would be a suggestion from the authors’ book which implies that teacher attendance reflects student performance. As I pondered on that simple statement many things came to mind. As educators we forget that the CORE values that we ask our students to emulate are the values we need to reflect on and model ourselves. As we go deeper and dissect one more CORE factor for school success; we examine carefully our fourth value – expectations. Expectation is a word that is loosely used and meaning taking for granted. As educators explore how expectations greatly affect students it becomes apparent that teacher influences greatly affect student performance through expectations (Marzano, 2007). In recalling my own experiences as a student, there were often times I would comment about a teacher – that she or he was the best teacher I ever had. I have wondered since then, what makes an effective teacher and how those effective teachers come to understand difficult students.

Whitaker and Zoul present various facets of expectations including anticipate, envision, believe, trust, foresee, and insist on. They describe two categories of teacher behaviors that communicate expectations to students; affective tone and quality of interactions (Marzano, 2007). These two variables seem imperative to survival to students who struggle academically and behaviorally. When students know that limitations are put on them they can only strive to the limit that is set; which then becomes a standard. As we develop as educators, we have higher expectations towards our students. In turn we then help to develop student self-esteem and self-efficacy (Rutter *et al.*, 1979).

Overall, *4 Core Factors for School Success* is an engaging book that revisits the essence of practical teaching and what is foundational to administrators. This book clarifies the core values which all great educators have in common and contribute to school success. For all those who want to create better schools, these factors are at the center of behaviors which lead to results. The book is easy to read and written in a teacher-school administrator friendly manner. While this book gives educators the base line on how to observe students and how to implement core strategies; this book is equally fundamentally sound on many other levels. This book will engage new teachers on how not to destroy the self-esteem of students but build their self-efficacy. It also reinforces administrators and master teachers to re-think and ask specific questions: How are the interventions established and do they support all aspects of CORE.

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### **Grading Education: Getting Accountability Right**

*Richard Rothstein, Rebecca Jacobsen and Tamara Wilder*

Economic Policy Institute, Teachers College Press

Washington, DC, New York, NY

2008

267 pp.

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Throughout its history American education has defined board goals deemed important in the development of its youth. In *Grading Education: Getting Accountability Right* Rothstein *et al.* (2008) assert that these goals have remained surprisingly the same and are described in eight categories for which schools are to be held accountable. Though slight variations in descriptors for these outcomes, they remain basically those valued since inception of the American educational system. These categories include basic academic knowledge and skills, critical thinking and problem solving, appreciation of the arts and literature, preparation for skilled employment, social skills and work ethic, citizenship and community responsibility, physical health, and emotional health.

While schools should be held accountable for student learning and citizens have a right to know if public funding is used appropriately it is unfair to assume that standardized testing in math and reading alone can effectively provide that accountability. Such is the case with No Child Left Behind (NCLB). According to the authors (p. 2), "Although tests, properly interpreted, can contribute some important information about school quality, testing alone is a poor way to measure whether schools, or their students, perform adequately." They further concur (p. 9), that "holding schools accountable for math and reading tests has created incentives for educators to pay less attention to curricular areas for which they are not held accountable" and propose holding institutions accountable for producing student learning in all categories in a balanced fashion not so easily measured using the current accountability system mandated in NCLB.

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The authors challenge the standardized measures of NCLB and boldly suggest measures to examine broader school outcomes to determine if indeed education is performing satisfactorily. They state that when the (p. 142) “federal government’s National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) was designed in the 1960s and implemented in the 1970s, it embodied many of the characteristics of a sophisticated and balanced accountability system.” However, they conclude that NAEP (p. 142) “later degenerated into a test mainly designed to produce academic test scores largely because Congress, while wanting accountability, was unwilling to appropriate the relatively small sums required to do accountability right.” Lack of appropriate funding has stifled the development of an accountability system to measure these broader school outcomes deemed important.

Organized into eight chapters, the book is easy to follow. In brief, while Chapter 1 acknowledges the need for an accountability system, Chapter 2 surveys the American public’s value of the goals of education. In Chapter 3, the authors describe the limitations that NCLB places on learning as it holds schools accountable for only reading and math at the expense of other content and skills. Chapter 4 provides a comprehensive description about how an (p. 9) “accountability system organized around achieving a fixed proficiency point leads to excessive concentration on students whose performance is slightly below that point and ignores students who are either above or far below it” (p. 9). Chapter 5 compares accountability plans to lessons learned if state and federal policy makers would learn from the experiences of other public and private fields. In Chapter 6, the influence of NAEP is analyzed. The authors focus on other means of examining schools to include inspection of schools and other institutions responsible for the development of youth.

Chapter 7 gives a historical account of the evolution of American school boards and investigates other nations’ school governance systems. In Chapter 8, the authors elaborate further on the inadequacy of NCLB and emphasize the importance of state federal control of education as opposed to federal control. While state control of education is preferred, the authors are adamant that federal responsibility must be in assuring that each state has the fiscal capacity to support schools.

The authors are supporters of an expanded NAEP state-level assessment that will assess students in all subjects, not only reading and mathematics. They place emphasis on collection of data to include not only ethnicity but also a delineation of free or reduced lunch eligibility, education level of parents, family structure (e.g. single parent) and country of parent’s birth. Such information the authors believe would (p. 148) “facilitate the ability of state leaders to draw valid conclusions about their policy needs” as it informs the system about economic status of families and offers valuable information pertinent to different circumstances from those who (p. 148) “are third generation and beyond” and those considerably poorer than others. The authors further advocate for NAEP scores being reported on scales and not achievement levels, age-level and not grade-level sampling, and inclusive of supplemental out-of-school samples to include a household survey. Proponents of NAEP, these authors believe this expanded assessment can inform (p. 152) “governors, legislators and citizens the extent to which their states are doing an adequate job of generating student success in each of the eight goals” identified.

Among the several interesting and helpful features of the book are four appendices: *Schools as Scapegoats*, *A Broader, Bolder Approach to Education*, *Goals, Survey Methodology and Teacher Accounts of Goal Distortion*. As one example, *Schools as Scapegoats*, co-authored by Lawrence Mishel and Richard Rothstein, is reproduced

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with minor modifications from *The American Prospect*, October 12, 2007. The authors claim that (p. 168) “the elite consensus on education as a cure-all seems to be collapsing” and that blaming education on inadequate schooling “might be too simplistic” and deserves to be examined. Noted in this appendix are references to position papers, views of economists and statistics on jobs available for youth yet not equally available. After analyzing a group of twenty-first century occupations not requiring college education, they report that (p. 170) “white non-college youth were 50% more likely to land one of these “good” jobs than black non-college youth.” Proponents of reinstating vocational or career education in schools, they also agree with the statement that (p. 170) “No rebalancing of the labor force can restore a more equal distribution of productivity gains without government intervention and changes in private sector behavior.”

This book should provoke the thoughts of policy makers, politicians and those willing to take the next steps in addressing the gaps in NCLB. Focusing on content beyond math and reading scores, which dominate NCLB, this book challenges those responsible for assessments that focus on limited knowledge to place value on preparing youth for learning beyond the basics. By describing an accountability plan for public education that involves an expanded NAEP, Rothstein, Jacobsen and Wilder advocate for an inspection model involving professional educators, members of the public, representatives of the business community and elected officials. While inclusive of standardized test scores, student work beyond that reflected in a state exam should be included when evaluating the progress of schools. It is a must read for those stakeholders dissatisfied with the constraints of NCLB and those seeking to change accountability for the twenty-first century.

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#### **Reference**

Rothstein, R., Jacobsen, R. and Wilder, T. (2008), *Grading Education: Getting Accountability right*, Economic Policy Institute, Washington, DC.

#### **Inclusive Assessment and Accountability: A Guide to Accommodations for Students with Diverse Needs**

*Sara E. Bolt and Andrew T. Roach*

Guilford Press

New York, NY

2008

158 pp.

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The success of any educational system lies on the premise that students will attain certain benchmarks. The proof available to stakeholders to ascertain the success or

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failure of the system is mainly through assessments. Applying the same yardstick to learners, who possess varied and differing learning abilities, and capabilities flies in the face of fairness and commonsense. It is only when students are assessed fairly and inclusively that a system can be said to be responsive to the needs of all learners irrespective of color, age, origin, or ethnicity. Such a system when deemed fair can then be used to hold the educators accountable. Even though students with disabilities represent a relatively small but significant group of students in US schools their education is heavily influenced by federal and state law as well as by long-standing beliefs about the purpose of education and the extreme heterogeneity of the population. To cater for this heterogeneity there is need to adopt assessment and accountability models that guarantee individualization, integration, economic independence, self-determination, and self-advocacy. One large-scale assessment cannot and should not meet all needs for educational data. This is the message offered by Bolt and Roach (2009) in their book, *Inclusive Assessment and Accountability: A Guide to Accommodations for Students with Diverse Needs*.

Citing from immense research and expertise in large-scale assessment, the authors clearly point out that despite an increase in the standards-based accountability movement it seems as though students with special needs are not well catered for in these assessments. This is despite the mandated professional and in-service training focused on inclusive instructional and assessment practices as provided by No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Where there is some semblance of assessment, inclusion of students with diverse needs is often plagued by unusual variability in accommodations and assessments practices which may be an indication of either a lack of reliable professional standards to guide practices or/and lack of capacity to effectively include these students in the state standards-based accountability. To fill this gap, the authors have written this book to provide guidance and materials that if used would widen the base applicability of the standards-based large-scale assessments and in the long-run improve access to instruction for all students.

To ensure that the book is easily understandable and an easy read for the general public, the authors have divided the book into eight chapters. Each chapter builds and transitions smoothly into the subsequent chapter. In Chapter 1, “No child left behind and standards-based reform and accountability,” a brief historical background of the standards-based reform movement as well as information on NCLB and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act are provided. The authors try to demystify different types of standards as well as NCLB’s influence on the standards-based reform and accountability. Since educators who work with students with diverse needs – and those who do not are often uninformed, or misinformed about standards-based reform and accountability systems, these educators will acquire the knowledge to not only know but also differentiate unintended and intended consequences of the reforms.

“Making participation decisions for diverse students” is Chapter 2 in which the authors expound on the right of all students to the intended benefits of improved teaching and learning yet it is unclear on how best to include diverse students their unique characteristics notwithstanding. The authors provide a broad overview of participations options available and a nine-step process that could be used when making such decisions. Although, there is variation in the 50 states on options for participation, individual education plans (IEP) teams should be consulted when

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making decisions based on disability category, restrictiveness of educational setting, difficulty level of the test, fear that student will not pass the test and how the student has participated in the assessment program in the past. Case examples of forms used when making these decisions and choices are included at the end of the chapter. In Chapter 3, "Testing accommodations for students with disabilities" the authors focus on methods for determining whether certain test alterations are appropriate in those situations in which such changes may be needed for the student to demonstrate their knowledge and skills on tests. The authors discuss some student characteristics that interfere with accurate test measurement as well as types of accommodations. Since students are different and unique, much thought and input from IEP committees as well as the students is required in making the final decision bearing in mind that at times provision for an accommodation could potentially lead to additional challenges to appropriate testing. The authors have also given an overview of state accommodation policies as well as a discussion about the need to align testing and instructional accommodations. Since some service providers may encounter some difficulty in making decisions on test accommodations, the authors have lessened their work by providing a list of questions to guide this process both at the district, school, and individual level and capped it with case examples.

In Chapter 4, the authors discuss "Testing accommodations for English language learners." Large-scale assessment and accountability systems that are developed to measure the academic skills for the general population also need to include English language learners (ELL) (p. 64). Problems encountered in the choice of an accommodation include not only identifying target skills for ELL's but also deciding on the language in which the test material should be presented. The authors have listed unique student characteristics such as prior and current academic experiences as well as variables associated with the development of second-language development that should be taken into consideration. One observation made by the authors is that even though some accommodations commonly considered for students with disabilities might also apply to ELL's, educators must only consider accommodations that would reduce linguistic difficulties. This observation is way overdue given the fact that when teachers fail to communicate effectively with ELL's, they are quick to lump and label them as disabled yet in the strictest sense ELL's are not disabled but lack a proficiency level that can allow them to articulate their ideas and respond to the teachers cues. At the end of the chapter, the authors have given a case example and a form that is used in participation decision making for ELL's.

Chapter 5, "Alternate assessments for students with disabilities" is devoted to those students with significant disabilities who even after being accorded various testing accommodations in large-scale assessments are unable to participate in the said tests. For such students hope is not lost for they too can participate in assessments through alternate assessments based on alternate achievement standards (AA-AAS). Determining who should participate in AA-AAS, a checklist is used by participants in students' IEP meetings. Even though debate abounds as to the most appropriate AA-AAS, what is not subject to debate is the fact that AA-AAS instruments must have technical adequacy and should measure what they were intended to measure. Challenges that might affect the optimum implementation of alternate assessments are discussed interspersed with a horde of forms and worksheets that are used in AA-AAS. In Chapter 6, "Facilitating and evaluating access to the general education curriculum"

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is the subject of discussion. The authors offer various definitions of a general curriculum noting that the over reliance on text books to anchor learning creates numerous barriers to access and involvement for students with disabilities and ELL's especially the reading level of the written texts. The authors contend that students with disabilities and ELL's have a right to access the general curriculum and have provided a variety of models and strategies that have been proposed by researchers to support this objective.

Chapter 7, "Universal design for instruction and assessment" borrows heavily from architecture. The whole idea of a "Universal design for instruction and assessment" lies in the fact that it is possible to design an assessment and instructional system that is accessible to the widest variety of students as opposed to those with a particular disability. Just like ramps are used by those in wheel chairs and those who are temporarily ill or even with an ambulance crew accessing and exiting a building with a patient, so should curriculums be designed to benefit many. The need for accommodations in any instruction and standards-based assessment is indicative of the exclusionary nature of these tests. To achieve such a universal design, the authors suggest that goals for assessment and instructions should be carefully considered along with the various challenges that diverse students may encounter in their attempts to demonstrate their knowledge (p. 122). The legal requirements for universal design in education as well as principles of universal design have also been dealt with though not at great depth. The authors have included however detailed examples of universal design for assessment and universal design for learning and how instruction in a state standard might be addressed in a traditional format.

The eighth and concluding chapter is allows for the authors to register their wish and purpose for writing this book: *That Educators and Stakeholders* will use the information in this book to *Take Proactive Stance Towards Inclusive Standards-Based Reform Accountability*. An overview of a litany of professional standards for assessment and accountability that have been developed by various organizations (e.g. American Federation of Teachers in conjunction with the National Council on Measurement in Education and the National Education Association; National Center for Educational Outcomes). The authors have also provided several statements that mirror their beliefs, a list of principles and characteristics of inclusive assessment and accountability, federal enterprise architecture principles, and primary recommendations from the expert panel on assessment. This chapter is quite useful as it contains ideas and advice for educators as well as family members regarding inclusion of students with disabilities and ELL's in the general education curriculum and large-scale assessments. The inclusion of standards developed by professionals and other stakeholders gives this chapter "legitimacy" since the standards have been developed through research, consultations, and deliberations from all stake holders.

Overall, *Inclusive Assessment and Accountability: A Guide to Accommodations for Students with Diverse Needs* is well written and offers hope to the many students with diverse needs and ELL's who have for a long time been unable to participate in standards-based accountability either due to the limited opportunities availed to them or lack of knowledge as to how best to develop an inclusive accountability system. Bolt and Roach have shared in this book not only their academic expertise but also their experience working directly with state and local educators on policy and practice issues related to large-scale assessment for system accountability. Their obvious solid

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grounding and deep understanding of both state and local practice makes this book an important resource for educators. The addition of dynamic web-based tools and web links to current and ongoing research, research citations, research findings and practice discoveries propels the book a must read for those educators and policy makers who believe that assessments need to be not only valid measures of academic performance but also meaningful and manageable tools for test users. To the educators and policy holders, this book will act as one-stop shop for them. The knowledge they will gain from reading this book will go along way not only in making them more responsive to the needs of students with diverse needs but also widen their choice of accommodations when the need arises. For the parents and the IEP committee members, here is a resource book that has examples of what needs to be done in order to develop individualized IEP's that have the interests of the students at heart while maintaining the integrity and purpose of the assessment tool. The zeal and devotion to the authors desire of seeing an inclusive assessment and accountability is quite evident. They have made use of more than a 100 pieces of research in bolstering and cementing their arguments. The book is highly recommended to all those involved in the education profession from PreK-12 through higher education. Normally, appendices are located at the back of any book but the authors have decided to include them at the end of each chapter and this gives a breath of fresh air. A reader avoids flipping back and forth trying thus this feature enhances continuity. The inclusion of actual forms used in schools breathes life into the book as teachers look at familiar forms and identify themselves with the authors and the book.

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Bolt, S.E. and Roach, A. (2009), *Inclusive Assessment and Accountability: A Guide to Accommodations for Students with Diverse Needs*, Guilford Press, New York, NY.

#### **Communication: The Key to Effective Leadership**

*Judith Ann Pauley and Joseph F. Pauley*

Quality Press, American Society for Quality

2009

100 pp.

ISBN 978-0-87389-767-9

\$25.00

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As twenty-first century leaders, whether you are a novice or veteran leader, you are likely to be facing challenges that no other leaders have had to face. It is likely that you have searched for leadership theories and practices to help you. Thus, the goal of this book review is to provide sufficient information for you to make an informed decision regarding the book authored by Joe and Judy Pauley entitled, *Communication: The Key to Effective Leadership*.

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The book is tightly written and is organized into ten chapters, including two forewords and an introduction in which the research base for the content is established. We believe the book comes at a crucial time in the history of educational leadership, both in the USA and world wide. Recently, leaders and those whom they are responsible to lead are often unprepared to deal with the complexities of a diverse workforce in which daily crises abound, especially those countless opportunities that require changes at all levels.

The book is not a collection of essays to help leaders feel good about their roles. It is a hard-driving account of the research-proven strategies for implementing the Process Communication Model<sup>®</sup> first articulated by Kahler (1988). In Chapter 1, the Pauleys establish the rationale for why everyone can benefit from this book, that is, “Everyone is a leader to someone.” In *An Instructors Guide to The Leadership Challenge*, Kouzes and Posner (2002, p. vii) resonate strongly with the Pauleys’ perspective:

Leadership is not just about leaders. Nor is leadership about some position or place in an organization or community. In today’s world – of unrelenting changes in technology, marketplaces, organizational alliances, mergers, and partnerships; of increasing global competitiveness; of accelerating diversity of ideas along with a rainbow coalition of individual backgrounds, beliefs, abilities, and experiences; of continuing reengineering of processes and right-sizing of organizations and flattening of organizational forums – leadership must be everyone’s business.

The next seven chapters provide detailed concepts and practices that help leaders:

- (1) Organize a team.
- (2) Establish trust.
- (3) Inspire confidence.
- (4) Select the correct interaction style.
- (5) Get buy-in.
- (6) Develop the team.
- (7) Get results.

The final two chapters focus on topics rarely discussed in the leadership literature:

- (1) How leaders can recognize when people are in distress and then select strategies that invite them out of distress.
- (2) How leaders can reduce their own levels of distress.

Each chapter is filled with examples of leaders who have successfully applied the concepts and strategies of process communication.

We are sure that *Journal of Educational Administration (JEA)* readers are familiar with a range of leadership theorists and practitioners, such as Covey (1992), Deming (1986), Fischer *et al.* (1991), Fulton (1995), Senge (1994) and Kouzes and Posner (2002). We believe that the prevailing literature focuses on different styles of leadership and emphasizes the importance of communication, but rarely discusses how to make good communication happen and rarely focuses on the impact on the receiver. That is why, we believe that researchers and practitioners at all levels of educational administration are sure to find lots of value when delving into the contents of the Pauleys’ book.

Those who have studied and applied principles from Senge (1994) can appreciate the Pauleys' orientation towards values-centered communications, communications that value the relationships between leaders and those whom they lead. They can identify how Covey's principled centered leadership can be enhanced with the Pauleys' communication tips for team building and inspiring confidence. Moreover, process communication resonates with Senge's systems perspectives, especially with respect to the importance of dialogue which allows a group to access a larger pool of common meaning, which cannot be accessed individually. A familiar part of a leader's role includes making sure that team members can effectively carry out that dialogue, and the Pauleys' pointers help that to happen. *JEA* readers can appreciate the advice for how to get results, especially within the context of implementing principles of total quality management (Deming, 1986).

In Chapter 2, the Pauleys suggest that (p.11):

[...] wise leaders assess the character strengths needed to achieve their vision and deliberately seek out those persons who have the strengths needed. However, because each of the personality types is different, the leader has to use different strategies to make certain that each person has an opportunity to provide input.

They elaborate on the six personality types, describe how to recognize that type in oneself and others, how to employ specific communication channels to effectively interact with the personality types, how to recognize when the person is in distress and how to use communication strategies to invite that person out of distress.

The Pauleys expand the nature and scope of leadership responsibility to include an understanding of the dynamics of process communication, especially when they illustrate their points with lessons for emerging leaders, particularly in the field of education. For example, the Pauleys state (p. 28):

When team leaders and managers do not individualize the way they interact with their colleagues and employees and do not motivate each according to his or her needs, the employees may show signs of distress that are predictable and observable. Leaders, who know the warning signs to look for and recognize the significance of the behavior when they see it, can quickly intervene to re-motivate the employee.

We believe that, after reading and applying the tips on individualizing your interaction styles as a leader, readers will better understand why the Pauleys introduce this chapter with Dwight D. Eisenhower's remark (p. 27), "You don't lead by hitting people over the head – that's assault, not leadership."

Illustrative case studies show how the process communication strategies have worked in particular companies. The compelling stories from people in leadership roles representing diverse organizations, businesses, and companies from both the private and the public sector (including health and human services, education, and the military) provide the greatest inspiration that can lead *JEA* readers to implementing the Pauleys' keys to effective communication so as to increase their own leadership effectiveness. Cases range in topics near and dear to leaders at all levels, including customer relations, personnel selection, fund raising, and negotiations. Later, in Chapter 6, the Pauleys emphasize the outcomes that can be expected when process communication is implemented (p. 48):

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Briefly, stated, if leaders will ensure that every employee gets their motivational needs met every day, the employees are more likely to stay out of distress and will be much more willing to endorse the need for change and to support a quality program.

This emphasis on ensuring that everyone is helping to accomplish the transformation required in times of change echoes much of Dr Deming's work (see out of the crisis, for example).

The Pauleys do not tread lightly into the turbulent waters that today's leaders face. Rather, they showcase how leaders can effectively address vexing questions such as, "How can I improve my bottom line, my company's net worth?" In fact, we believe that the Pauleys' emphasis on leaders' roles and responsibilities to meet their own psychological needs and to help others get their needs met adds a new dimension to job descriptions for leaders.

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