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# Preface

With this fourth edition, *School Leadership* marks its 25th anniversary. We compiled the first edition of this handbook in 1981, after principals, superintendents, and other administrators told us of their need for practical information that would help them lead more effectively.

School leaders responded with eagerness to that handbook and to the subsequent two editions, confirming the need for a readable synthesis of research findings and best practices. Many administrators have told us they consult the handbook regularly, and the book also has been widely used as a text in the preservice and inservice training of school leaders throughout the country.

This latest edition emphasizes the school leader's role as a champion of student learning. In recent years, school leaders have had to cope with both new licensure standards focused on student learning and new expectations for student achievement in state and federal legislation, especially the No Child Left Behind Act. The book's new subtitle, *Handbook for Excellence in Student Learning*, signals our intent to make this edition a resource for leaders to succeed in this new environment.

Evidence now clearly shows that principals can make a real difference in student learning, and they do not have to return to the classroom for face-to-face interaction with students to make it happen. Their influence on academic learning is indirect yet significant, exerted through a set of key leadership behaviors that create the right kind of conditions in their schools for effective instruction and learning to occur. The benefit of this handbook is that it shows principals how to excel in those behaviors so they can make the most of their impact on students' academic success.

This new and expanded edition draws from the growing knowledge base on educational leadership to help school leaders meet the challenge of making sure all their students learn.

The theme of leadership for learning gave us the rationale to expand the book from its previous 15 chapters to 19. Coverage of instructional leadership, for example, grew from one chapter in previous editions to three in this one, and other new chapters likewise emphasize this theme. As authors revised or completely rewrote preexisting chapters, they gave added attention to how leadership affects student learning.

At the beginning of the book, we added two chapters in a new part, "The State of School Leadership." The first chapter provides an overview of issues surrounding the principalship, and the second summarizes research findings on the effects of leadership.

In addition to the five new chapters on instructional leadership and the state of leadership, six new chapters address topics that have risen in prominence since the previous edition appeared:

- Accountable Leadership
- Distributed Leadership
- Political Leadership
- Engaging the Public
- Managing Data for Decision Making: Creating Knowledge From Information
- Allocating Human, Financial, and Physical Resources

To make room for these new chapters, we were able to carry over only eight chapters from the previous edition, and these have undergone varying degrees of revision, some at the hands of new authors.

## HOW THIS BOOK WAS WRITTEN

The purpose of this book is not necessarily to present new views or the authors' views of leadership. The chapter authors are free to express their opinions, but their primary mission is to summarize and explain a large body of literature with which educational leaders want and need to be familiar.

A perusal of the original sources cited in the references makes it apparent that no busy administrator or student has time to read all these books and articles. To make these important works easily accessible, the authors have tried to present the best ideas briefly and succinctly. This technique of distilling the most useful and important ideas is called "information analysis."

The authors of this book are more than mere translators of information and ideas. They also attempt to synthesize information, to show how theories and ideas are connected, and to resolve conflicting views. Several chapters in this edition also benefit from the expertise of academicians and educational practitioners who bring a lifetime of learning and professional wisdom to their topics.

Perhaps the most important kind of information synthesis in this book is the integration of theory and practice. Many books explain leadership theories, and many others are concerned with the "how-to" of leadership practice. Practitioners complain that the theoretical writing is not useful in their everyday work, and researchers and theoreticians look askance at "practical" works whose ideas and suggestions are not empirically validated.

Practitioners perceive that researchers and theoreticians are too isolated from the real problems of schools, that theories validated in laboratory settings may disintegrate in actual classrooms. Researchers and theoreticians argue that recommendations validated by the experience of only one administrator or one school are much too subjective to be useful to others.

Few books try to integrate these two competing views. This book tries to present the most useful aspects of theory along with the most thoughtful recommendations for action.

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A synthesis of the two, especially in areas where findings agree, can avoid many of the problems inherent in each method alone. The book also contains ideas from practitioners within the field.

The numerous citations in this book are representative and by no means inclusive of all literature in the field of school leadership. We encourage our readers, as they have time, to conduct their own searches of literature on topics of interest and apply their own analytic skills to the information they find.

### INTENDED AUDIENCE

The handbook is written primarily for school-based and central-office educators in administrative and leadership positions at all levels from kindergarten through Grade 12. Principals, assistant principals, teacher-leaders, staff-development personnel, superintendents, and other educators can use the handbook as a reference when particular issues arise. They can also turn to it on a regular basis for knowledge and insight that can help them grow in their leadership skills and effectiveness.

Those who aspire to leadership roles in education will gain knowledge of both the tasks and processes of leadership and the cultural and organizational context of schooling in which they will exercise their leadership.

Instructors in leadership training programs will find that this edition, even more than previous editions, exposes their students to a comprehensive set of leadership issues, dilemmas, challenges, and questions to stimulate their thinking and reflection and to prepare them for effective practice. Students in leadership preparation programs will appreciate not only the handbook's rich content but also its accessible style and structure.

### METHOD OF CITATION

To enhance readability, the book adheres to a sparse reference style. We avoid footnotes and try to keep the text uncluttered by parenthetical citation data. When citing a published work in a chapter for the first time, we merely give the author's full name, without a date or page numbers. Subsequent citations to the same work usually mention only the author's last name. To distinguish between multiple publications by a single author, we add dates (sometimes in parentheses) or use other conventions in the text to clearly indicate which title is being cited.

References are listed alphabetically, grouped by chapter at the back of the book in the reference section. For those readers who want to explore a topic further, these ample references are an ideal starting place.

Note that citations in the text include authors' full names, just as they appear in the works cited. This preference is contrary to the use in much of the academic press of only initials for first and middle names, a practice we consider both dehumanizing and impractical in the age of Internet searching. (Try to do a Google search for M. M. Johnson, for example, and compare your results with those for Marlene M. Johnson.)

## SCOPE AND ORGANIZATION

This volume looks at school leadership from five perspectives: the person, the values, the structure, the mission, and the skills. In addition, two chapters in Part I, “The State of School Leadership,” provide an overview of the position of the principal in today’s schools and of what research tells us about the effects of educational leadership. Both chapters in Part I are new in this edition.

Three chapters in Part II, “The Person,” provide something of a theoretical background. These chapters answer several key questions: What characteristics do leaders exhibit? Which leadership styles and strategies seem to work best in which circumstances? How are school leaders inducted into their positions, and how do they grow as professionals?

The first two chapters in this part have been updated with new content, and the third chapter (formerly on training and selection of leaders) has been rewritten with a focus on leadership development.

The three chapters in Part III, “The Values,” deal with the foundation of ethics, vision, and values that give moral purpose and substance to the practice of school leadership. What are the leader’s ethical responsibilities? Why is vision vital to the leader, and how is it grasped? How can the leader help construct a prolearning culture in his or her school?

The first two chapters in this part are revisions, and the third, “Cultural Leadership,” replaces the previous edition’s chapter with the same title.

Four chapters in Part IV, “The Structure,” take a look at the organizational and political systems or support structures that underlie school leadership. These chapters examine the framework of accountability, the balance of authority between the central office and the school site, the distribution of leadership functions among the school staff, and the political context of school leadership.

These chapters, all of which are new or completely rewritten for this edition, concern structures and management systems that can make good educational leadership possible—or impossible.

Because of the heightened interest in leadership for learning, instructional leadership is now the subject of three new chapters, in Part V, “The Mission: Student Learning.” These chapters give school leaders an authoritative guide to research-based methods of supporting the learning process, monitoring learners’ progress, and cultivating a learning-focused community.

The chapters in Part VI, “The Skills,” highlight the abilities needed by administrators to be effective leaders in education today. This part of the volume looks at such essential skills as how to communicate verbally and in writing; how to engage stakeholders in the community for the support of schools and learning; how to display data for decisions about school improvement; and how to allocate human, financial, and physical resources for optimum support of learning.

The chapters on use of data and resource allocation are new in this edition. The chapters on communication and community engagement (formerly “coalition building”) were rewritten in entirety.

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Finally, after each chapter, we added “Reflections,” which are action points or questions to help readers put the ideas into practice. In classroom settings, instructors can use the questions to stimulate discussion about the chapters’ major themes.

The book’s writing and editorial style aim for clarity and precision. Each chapter is a straightforward exposition of ideas and evidence on the topic, free of jargon and technical data.

This book is called a handbook because it is designed to be used as a reference when particular problems and concerns arise as well as to be read straight through. Readers concerned about vision or political leverage or the advantages of different leadership strategies can turn directly to the appropriate chapters for the information they are seeking without reading the previous chapters. It is a book to be sampled, to be digested slowly, and to be turned to again and again as leaders grow in their skills and effectiveness.

As the lineup of chapters indicates, this handbook distills an increasingly robust body of research on school leadership. In offering this latest edition to you, we are therefore more confident than ever that you will find within these pages the counsel necessary to help your staff, your students, and yourself succeed.

We welcome your comments and suggestions, as well as feedback on how this book has helped you perform and grow as a leader. Contact us at [stusmith@uoregon.edu](mailto:stusmith@uoregon.edu) and [ppiele@uoregon.edu](mailto:ppiele@uoregon.edu).