Introduction

PICTURE THIS

Juggling my school lunch tray and half-empty can of soda, I (Rosie) cautiously twisted the door knob and gently pushed open the door to the staff room so as not to spill the soda or drop the chicken nuggets, fries, and Jell-O sliding around on my plate. As the door slowly opened, and I made my way into the room, I heard Allison's emphatic voice saying, "I can't imagine myself still being a teacher five years from now! It just won't happen. I can't keep up this pace! I just can't! Teaching isn't what I thought it would be. It isn't fun anymore. There has to be something else I can do."

As the words poured out from her, a hush fell over the staff room as the other seven teachers realized that the principal had just entered the room.

Allison, a second-year teacher, looked up. She blushed. The panicked look that engulfed her face said it all.

Eight pairs of eyes were now fixed on me, the principal, as I set my tray down on the table, pulled out a chair, and joined the teachers. All of a sudden, I didn't feel like eating anymore. I glanced at each of them, looking into their tired and weary eyes, searching for the right words to say.

But there were none.

I sat at the table and felt their eyes pleading with me to find a way to make life better, emancipate them from all the mandates that were weighing them down, set them free, and help them soar. How I longed to give them wings to help students in their classrooms learn and achieve to their highest potential based on their own diagnosis of the situation, student learning, teaching styles, and professional judgment. I dreamed of watching every teacher smile from the sheer enjoyment of helping students learn while instinctively knowing that they are making a significant difference in the lives of the students they teach.

Allison's statement became the catalyst for dialogue among the veteran teachers and the neophytes on my staff. As I listened to them talk, I heard their frustrations. I felt their defeat and lack of hope. How they longed for a better life.

During the next ten minutes as we talked over lunch, the teachers spoke candidly about how tired they were of being told how to fill out the new form, only to find out a few weeks later that central office had once again changed their minds, and teachers would need to record the data in a different format on a new form all over again. They were tired of practicing for statewide testing and teaching to the test. They were tired of the cycle for collecting assessment data that left them frustrated because there wasn't time to analyze the data and implement new strategies before the next round of assessments began. They were overwhelmed by all of the trainings for new innovations that were coming and going even before they felt competent in using what they learned from the

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last inservice. They were frustrated because everything seemed disjointed and didn't always align with the new report card and how the teachers "thought things should be done." Most of all, they yearned to make learning fun for students and to be able to use student curiosity and interest to drive instruction rather than being worried that they wouldn't be on the same page as the teacher next door.

Just as the bell rang to send them back to class after their twenty-minute lunch, Allison stood up, pushed in her chair, grabbed her tray and summed up the entire conversation by saying, "If I knew this was what teaching was going to be like, I would have done something else." The room was pierced by the sharpness of the words. A deafening hush clouded the room as one by one the teachers stood up, dumped their lunch trays, put leftovers back into the staff refrigerator, and filed out of the staff room leaving me there, in silence, to finish my lunch.

I left lunch that day frustrated and angrier than I have ever felt in my entire career at a world that has spent decades searching for ways to recruit the best and the brightest young people into the field of education, yet does little to make sure they want to stay. Allison is a prime example of one of the best and brightest new recruits into the field of education. She is an excellent second-year teacher, highly competent and qualified, who cares deeply about her students. Allison is one of the first to arrive at our school each day, and one of the last to leave each night. But, in less than two years, her passion for teaching and her joy for helping students learn were gone. Her light was rapidly burning out.

That night, when I got home, all of my pent up thoughts and frustrations came pouring out over dinner. Once again, Bob listened as I vented about what I could do to "fix" everything and make it better. As we talked, and I reflected upon the lunch conversation, I knew it was time to do something.

I finally acknowledged the one question that has kept haunting me and tearing at my soul. Throughout my career, I have heard the words, "those who can, do. Those who can't, teach!" Yet, did we ever stop to ask ourselves, "why?" Why is it that we can't retain the Allisons of the world? Why do we continue to lose the best and the brightest teachers to other professions? What can we do to support them? What can we do to motivate them? What can we do to inspire them? What can we do to keep them? How do we help them make a difference?

Thus began our quest to help educators find ways to put the passion back into teaching, rediscover the joy of helping all students learn, and realize that they can and do make a difference in the lives of the students they work with.

This book is written for, and dedicated to, all of the educational leaders and stakeholders who, like us, want to improve the quality of life for all educators, especially the Allisons, by helping them achieve optimal levels of performance during the processes of teaching and learning so that we can all live, learn, work, and teach in collegial learning communities.

■ WHAT IF?

What if . . . the classroom, school, or district where you work was the one place you couldn't wait to get to each morning and the hardest place to leave at the end of each day? What would it look like? Sound like? Feel like?

The reality of life in the schools for many teachers today is reminiscent of life in the sweatshops for factory workers during the Industrial Revolution. Morale is low. The quality of life within the schools for adults is

shabby and in a state of disrepair. School administrators and teachers are treated like second-class citizens rather than respected for the professionals they are.

Innovations are bombarding teachers at an overwhelming rate as well-meaning central office administrators, who react from outside pressure, heap innovation upon innovation onto teachers. Administrators, fearful of being "on the list," are frantically searching for that golden fleece, that panacea, that certain something, that somehow and in some way will magically transform student learning, raise student test scores, and "leave no child behind."

In far too many schools, teachers are handed scripts and pacing guides that dictate what, when, and how to do their jobs. Outside "experts" prescribing districtwide one-size-fits-all workshops declare that by following their *recipes* all will be well. Seldom, however, have these outside "experts," busy hurling edicts at teachers, set foot into the schools, let alone the classrooms, and taken into account the unique needs of each individual student, classroom, school, or district. Teachers are overwhelmed and overburdened with report after report. In many instances, teachers are reassessing students so frequently there is no time to analyze the assessment data, design learning goals and interventions from the data to meet individual student needs, or implement strategies to see results. It is a vicious cycle with little time for self-reflection and a lot of time for self-doubt and questions about what difference any of this makes in the lives of their students anyway.

Many teachers will tell you that they no longer find meaning and purpose in the work they do. It is easier to find ways to externalize and blame the system rather than to take ownership and responsibility through an inherent sense of locus of control and efficacy. Worst of all, they question if what they are doing is making a difference in the lives of the students with whom they work. Often teachers feel helpless, defeated, and that their work has little value or useful purpose. Yet even when they should be elated because their student test scores go up, and their students make adequate yearly progress as defined "from above," far too often, their answer to whether or not they feel they are making a difference remains an emphatic "no." As a teacher from a New York City school recently described, "You work so hard to help students achieve, and as soon as they [central office] see that you have made progress, they change the rules and move the target."

After a decade of standards-based educational reform and accountability, the field of education is a very different place. National curriculum organizations (e.g., National Council For Teachers of Mathematics), state departments of education, and local school districts have developed comprehensive standards, clearly defined learning goals, and simplified curriculum guides. Finally, teachers have explicit knowledge and a clear understanding of what students need to master by the end of their course or the end of the year. For all of the bad publicity and fallout from the standards and accountability movement, especially the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation, there are still some important and positive gains. First, and most important, educators today know and understand what the students they are working with need to know and be able to do to achieve academic success. At the same time, most of our teachers are highly skilled and trained in content and pedagogy. They are able to make

informed professional decisions from a "menu of options" that would help them meet the personalized needs and individual learning styles of each child. But instead of being allowed the freedom to work autonomously as professionals within clearly defined boundaries to reach explicit target goals and achieve high standards, teachers are handed a single program, often with a script and schedule, and told "this is what you must do." More and more, teachers and administrators are feeling defeated, helpless, devalued, and worthless. Confidence and self-esteem are at an all-time low.

It is no wonder that educators have lost the passion and joy for teaching and learning that brought them into the educational profession in the first place. The expectations and challenges, especially those that are beyond their control, are increasing. Teachers and administrators are burning out and leaving the profession faster than ever before. Unfortunately, we have not spent nearly enough time improving the quality of life within our school communities to ensure educator retention.

There is a famous quote that can be attributed to Roland Barth from several decades ago still floating around in staff development circles. Using a transportation analogy, he reminded educators that when you get on a plane, the flight attendants instruct passengers that in case of an emergency they need to put the oxygen mask on themselves first, before they take care of other people.

The field of education has not heeded this very important message. If we are to improve student achievement today, in order to prepare productive and successful citizens of the world tomorrow, we must stop what we are doing and take care of the adults in the school communities first, so that they can better meet the needs of the children we serve.

On January 30, 2004, Dr. Dean Ornish was talking with Oprah Winfrey about heart disease, eating right, and the power of meditation. During the conversation, Dr. Ornish said that what really motivates people to make long-term changes in their behavior and the way they live is not the fear of dying, but the joy of living. He claimed that when people focus on being happy to be alive, they manage stress better, they increase their stamina and energy, they exercise more, and ultimately their hearts and brains get more blood. He said that because of this change in perspective, "you can actually reverse disease" (as cited in Hudson, 2004). We believe the same holds true for teaching and learning.

■ THE FEAR FACTOR

The accountability movement, especially the top-down mandates and sanctions under No Child Left Behind, have left educators anxious, "stressed to the max," in other words, "fearful of *dying*." More and more educators are feeling emotionally and physically overpowered by the threat and/or reality of their students not achieving adequate yearly progress as defined by states; their schools being placed on "the lists"; and "well-meaning" state departments of education, central office administrators, and/or outside consultants targeting their schools and classrooms offering help, support, and the "right way" to proceed. And, always looming in the back of educators' minds is the threat that their students will use

vouchers to go elsewhere, their school will be reconstituted or closed, and/or they will lose their jobs. The perception of many certified and non-certified school-based staff members is that there are too many "sticks" being used to motivate them to do their jobs. But, as Dr. Ornish explained, this type of "fear-driven motivation will work for only so long before the person goes back into denial" (as cited in Hudson, 2004) and the teacher closes the classroom door.

Likewise, Fullan (2005) states that for sustainability of innovations that lead to high levels of performance becoming institutionalized and embedded within the culture, there must be "continuous improvement, adaptation, and collective problem solving in the face of complex challenges that keep arising" (p. 22). Deep learning is one of eight factors that lead to sustainability. Fullan, based on W. E. Demming's suggestion that the prescription for success is to "drive out fear," states that to achieve deep learning and thus sustainability, we must "reduce the fear factor." To do this, we must shift the paradigm from *fear of failure* to one of *failing intelligently.* This means being able to learn and grow from your mistakes. What if we, as Farson and Keyes (2002) in their book by the same name, all believed that *whoever makes the most mistakes wins?*

Pfeffer and Sutton, in *The Knowing-Doing Gap* (2000), demonstrate how, in many workplaces, there is still a great deal of fear and distrust of management. They state that there is still "far more talk than action about using enlightened and humane management techniques" and this fear and distrust of management, they contend, "undermines organizational performance and, more specifically, the ability to turn knowledge into action" (p. 109). Pfeffer and Sutton continue by saying that:

> Fear helps create knowing-doing gaps because acting on one's knowledge requires that a person believe he or she will not be punished for doing so—that taking risks based on new information and insight will be rewarded, not punished. When people fear for their jobs, their futures, or even for their self-esteem, it is unlikely that they will feel secure enough to do anything but what they have done in the past. Fear will cause them to repeat past mistakes and re-create past problems, even when they know better ways of doing the work. (p. 109–110)

Fear and distrust within the school system, especially vertical fear from the top (i.e., teachers fear principals and principals fear superintendents), impede educators from turning what they know (their knowledge) into what they do (their actions). When managers (or administrators) demand results, "no matter what," learning, as well as the application of any new knowledge and skills, is inhibited. People are more likely to falsify or hide information. Andrew Grove of Intel (as cited in Pfeffer and Sutton, 2002) summed it up this way:

> The fear that might keep you from voicing your real thoughts is poison. Almost nothing could be more detrimental to the well-being of the company. . . . Once an environment of fear takes over, it will lead to paralysis throughout the organization and cut off the flow of bad news from the periphery. (p. 123)

Fear has two other disastrous effects on any organization according to Pfeffer and Sutton (2000). First, instead of looking at the long-term benefits of an innovation, people become paralyzed by the short-term fears and consequences from the implementation of the new plan or program. Secondly, fear creates a focus on individuals rather than on the collective "we." People tend to kick into survival mode, focusing on self-preservation at the expense of the collective good. Pfeffer and Sutton summarize management by fear this way:

> In organizations such as these the management philosophy is that people will work hardest if they're trying to avoid punishment. Avoiding punishment for yourself means finding ways to blame and punish others. In such a setting, there's no reason for people to work together for collective benefit, and lots of reasons for them to undermine each other's work and reputation. (p. 127)

Because of a winter storm in February 2007, JetBlue, an airline that prides itself on its passenger friendly image, suddenly found its customer service record spiraling downward. The airline was forced to cancel more than 1,100 flights, leaving passengers stranded. Many passengers sat on the tarmac for as long as ten hours waiting to take off. Even five days after the storm had passed, one quarter of all JetBlue flights were still being cancelled (JetBlue, 2007b).

Most companies facing similar circumstances would see heads flying and people fired. Yet, on NBC's *Today Show* on February 20, 2007, JetBlue Chairman David Neeleman told coanchor Matt Lauer that no one would lose his or her job because of this incident. Instead he said his company found a weakness in their system and would be 100 percent better because they "know what failed, what can be fixed, and what will be fixed" (as cited in Bell, 2007). Neeleman said it was a "horrifying experience" to watch the passenger-friendly image they had worked so hard to create being destroyed by the ice storm. But even while holding himself and the company accountable for what happened, he saw this as a learning opportunity. It gave JetBlue a determination to be even better than they were before. "It's not so much what happened to you, but how you react to it," he said, and continued:

> I don't run the airline for one quarter's results. We are going to go overboard to make sure that we give the credit back to the customer, that we apologize and explain what happened. More importantly, we will explain why this will never happen again, and then when we do that, we will offer something no other airline will offer customers and we will be held accountable with a laser beam focus to a *Bill of Rights* that we will have with us every day. (as cited in Bell, 2007)

JetBlue's retroactive *Bill of Rights* (see JetBlue, 2007a) came before Congress could impose such requirements, because as Neeleman told Lauer:

> I know what is right for our customers. We don't set out not to take care of our customers. Why should Congress tell us how to treat our people? We should be able to do that. We want to do it because it is the right thing to do and it keeps us focused on the future. (as cited in Bell, 2007)

It cost the company approximately $20–$30 million, yet no one lost their job. Instead, JetBlue learned from its mistakes, built a stronger infrastructure, and discovered a higher level of accountability, determination, and focus.

What if school districts could operate like JetBlue, taking responsibility for helping all students learn, not because Congress tells them what to do, but because educators know what is right and what their students need? What if the current educational accountability system was no longer grounded in fear of failure and punishment, including the fear of losing one's job or having your school reconstituted because of a single high-stakes yearly assessment? What if school districts could become learning organizations, able to fix their mistakes, build a stronger infrastructure, and—in the process—discover a higher level of accountability, determination, and focus? What if schools created their own "Bill of Rights" for students that became the mission and accountability system that all educators hold in front of themselves every day with a laser-like focus? What if schools were founded on the promise of bringing humanity back to teaching and learning?

What if we create the essential conditions so all educators focus on the joys of teaching and learning rather than on the fears of dying and failure?

■ THE CONTROL FACTOR

Often motivation is confused with control. According to Edward Deci (1995) there are two types of controlled behavior: *compliance* and *defiance.* Deci says, "compliance means doing something because you are told to do it," while defiance "means to do the opposite of what you are expected to do just because you are expected to do it" (p. 3). Instead of motivating people by getting them to comply with what the leader wants them to do, Deci argues for motivating people by stimulating, inspiring, nurturing, and creating the conditions that allow them to be "self-governing" or autonomous.

■ INTERNAL MOTIVATION

Most educators enter the field of education because they are internally motivated to do so. They have a deep desire to help others learn. Their greatest reward comes from the smallest of things, such as a student who understands a concept and can successfully complete a learning goal or task. When, however, the internal motivation is lost, the meaning, purpose, competence, self-confidence, efficacy, and the knowledge that you are making a difference is gone. Educators then lose their reason and desire to work. Morale becomes low. Consequently, many teachers simply collect their paychecks and wait for retirement or leave the profession and find ways to reinvent themselves in a different line of work.

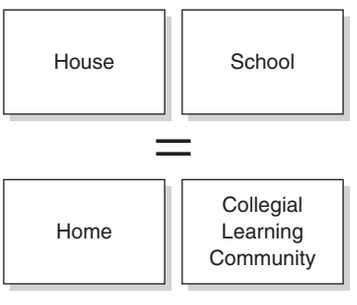
Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (2003) says that people who are happy, who understand clearly defined goals, who find the match between their skills and the challenges they face, who feel they belong and spend time with others, and who are immersed in complex activities that serve a greater purpose will be much more productive because they enjoy the work that they do. Csikszentmihalyi defines this motivational state as *flow.* We define this state as *optimal performance.*

Instead of motivation through fear, intimidation, and control, we must create the conditions that allow us to inspire, energize, and nurture educators to become internally motivated, discover flow, and rekindle the passion and joy of teaching and learning. Using Dr. Ornish's approach of helping people to make long-term behavioral changes, we must decrease or eliminate the use of "sticks" and "carrots" (extrinsic motivators) and increase the use of motivational strategies that lead to helping educators discover the joy in teaching and learning. We can do this by improving the quality of life within the school setting, fostering the conditions that enable and empower teachers to do their work and perform at optimal levels to achieve desired results, and helping both certified and noncertified staff members build relationships and find the pleasure of collaborating together within their school community. We must help educators rediscover the meaning and purpose in the work they do, gain self-respect, and recognize that they can and do make a significant difference in the lives of the students and families whom they serve. Most important, to achieve optimal performance, we must provide the leadership and structures that build relationships, autonomy, competence, and interdependence among educators. Ultimately the goal is to ensure that all members of the school community are internally motivated and achieve levels of optimal performance by letting their passion for teaching and joy of learning flow.

■ ISOLATION TO COLLEGIALITY

We have all experienced it—the school that makes you feel warm, welcome, and happy to be there, and the school that makes you feel cold, indifferent, and like an intruder who doesn't belong. It is hard to put your finger on what it is, but you know the difference the moment you step inside. Amazingly, one school can be that friendly, caring place, and another school, ten blocks away, still in the same district, can be the complete opposite. So what is it that makes the difference?

Figure 0.1 House Is to Home



We define that difference as the *quality of life for all individuals within the school setting*. The best way for us to describe what we mean by quality of life is through the analogy: *House* is to *home* as *school* is to *collegial learning community* (see Figure 0.1). That is to say, when we think of a house we think of a building. When we think of a home, we think of a warm, cozy, inviting, family environment. The same is true for a school. When we think of school, we think of an institution. When we think of a collegial learning community, we think of an interdependent, caring team of people who are learning and working together to achieve a morally compelling mission, be the best they can be, and make a difference.

Throughout this book, we discuss interdependence. Unless stated otherwise, when we refer to interdependence, we are talking about positive interdependence. In the Preface, and later in Chapter 11, when we discuss positive interdependence, we define a collegial learning community as *one in which a group of professional educators within a department, school, or district hold themselves and each other accountable for working together to achieve their*

shared goal, purpose, or school's mission through positive interdependence, reciprocal relationships, shared decision making, professional learning, and mutual responsibility. We also explain in Chapter 11 that just because faculty are put into groups to collaborate and learn from each other doesn't make them a team or help them work together interdependently or even more efficiently. In order for schools to become collegial learning communities, the ten motivational strategies and essential conditions must be strongly embedded within the school culture.

Most important, as you will learn in Chapter 3, the quality of life must exist as a solid foundation if administrators are to create the conditions for achieving optimal levels of performance. When quality of life supports the collegial learning community, schools become the place that teachers, administrators, and students can't wait to get to in the morning and hate to leave at night!

■ IMAGINE . . . WHAT IF?

What if . . . the classroom, school, or district where you work was the one place you couldn't wait to get to each morning and the hardest place to leave at the end of each day? What would it look like? Sound like? Feel like?

This is one of the most powerful exercises we have used with educators to help build a high-performing collegial learning community. We encourage you to use it now by yourself or with your study group before you continue reading this book. It will give you baseline information about yourself and your school environment as well as provide you with insight into your own school culture. As you read the book, you can refer back to your notes to compare your current situation with your vision of a quality school culture. When you are ready to take the plunge, we encourage you to use this activity with your school staff (both certified and noncertified) and/or your school improvement teams, including students and parents as appropriate, to identify the mental models that will help you design the school of your dreams.

To begin, fill in Figure 0.2 on the next page. Spend quality time *dreaming* about what it would take to make your school the one place you couldn't wait to be each morning and the hardest place to leave each night.

Often when I, Rosie, do this exercise, I picture myself standing in the middle of the *Cat In The Hat* ride in Seuss Landing at Universal Studios in Orlando. I use that setting as a starting point, a mental model, for what I want our elementary school to be. Of course, there is a lot more to it than just the *Cat In The Hat* ride. We can't begin to tell you how many times I have made Bob stand in line so I can try to figure out how to transform my school and emulate the *Cat In The Hat* ride. I have dreamed of being able to capture that kind of excitement, the vivid colors, the storybook (learning) coming alive, the feeling of being enthralled, and the joyous sounds of happy children of all ages (obviously I am thinking of the beginning of the day rather than the end of the day when the kids are tired).

Think of a place that you enjoy. Somewhere that you can't wait to get to and hate to leave (e.g., a vacation spot, a favorite place in your house) and begin there. What is it about that place that makes it so enjoyable? What would your school be like, if it were like your favorite spot?

Figure 0.2 Looks Like, Sounds Like, Feels Like

What Would It Look Like?	*What Would It Sound Like?*	*What Would It Feel Like?*

After you have completed the chart, put a check by those items that you already find in your school.

Put a star by those items that you want to make sure become a priority for you and your school.

Use Figure 0.2 as a guide while you read the rest of the book. After you finish each chapter, go back and look to see if the ten motivational factors and/or the essential conditions you just read about are included in your chart. Are they already present in your school? Or did you list them because you wish they were? If you didn't list them, but you think they are important and something you want to see at your school, add them into the chart.

Now, before you continue, write a paragraph that describes your school, the way you would most like it to be, so it is the one place you and others cannot wait to get to each day.

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We encourage you to use this same activity with your staff. It is listed again with further details and suggestions on our Web site at www.optimalperformancemodel.com. In addition, you may also download a study guide with tools to record your thoughts as you continue reading this book.

■ SO, WHAT?

We began our quest to help educators find ways to put the passion back into teaching, rediscover the joy of helping all students learn, achieve high levels of performance, realize that they can and do make a difference in the lives of the students they work with, and know there is hope for a better tomorrow. Like us, as you begin embedding the ten motivational strategies and essential conditions into your unique situation, you will find the educators you work with more likely to achieve and sustain levels of optimal performance. Our hope is that someday all educators will live, learn, work, and teach in a high-performing collegial learning community to achieve levels of optimal performance and successfully accomplish their school's morally compelling mission.