
Foreword

What a joy to read a book about education leadership that brings research, theory, and a spiritual perspective to bear on the realities of school life. In this very valuable piece of work, Joseph M. Giancola and Janice K. Hutchison have set out a straightforward challenge: How might we interrupt the *power over* untrusting, self-protecting, and other inhibiting features so evident in the lives of professionals in far too many of our schools? The concern about such features is that the ways teachers and principals frame, deliberate over, make decisions about, and act on the problematics of teaching and learning directly affect the quality of life and learning for students. For this reason, they offer a compelling alternative way to think about and enact professional leadership in schools.

They set out in clear terms an image of schools (and districts) centered by a humane approach to the work at hand. They do so by integrating research, both their own and from the body of inquiry about organizational life with theories about adult learning, power allocations, trusting relationships, and an ethic of caring and principles of a strong democracy. Through this vantage point, they invite the reader to consider bringing a Humane Dimension to school leadership as they create and sustain a transformative school culture.

If you have had the opportunity to visit a number of schools during the instructional day, you remember some because you saw principals and teachers talking about curriculum and teaching or about some accomplishment a student or group experienced, or about an issue facing them. They listened to each other, sought out each other's views, and respected and trusted one another even when they disagreed. The focus was student well-being and learning. These are but a few of the markers of a school in which the professional life is transformational in character.

By *transformational* is meant the ongoing growth of individuals and organizations through the continuous examination of our beliefs and the behaviors we exhibit in our workplaces and with each other. This is not a pathological exercise directed toward finding out what is wrong and fixing it; rather, it is a process of learning and problem solving with each other to enrich the quality of life and learning in the school. It is transformational because the professionals are in the continuous process of reframing the problems and issues that define each school day. They do

xii Transforming the Culture of School Leadership

not assume that there is but one way or one authority who has the answers. It is transformational because these efforts at constructing meaningful educational programs and practices are grounded in principles of pedagogy, democracy, and caring. The Humane Dimension of transformative schools is that set of principles and behaviors that form the passion we invoke as we work together in this important effort called education.

I, as have many readers, have worked in organizations that lacked sufficient humaneness or transformational qualities, and I have worked in some that gave meaning to those same qualities. Indeed, I probably have contributed to both the lack and hopefully the presence of these growth-fostering conditions. It is far more meaningful and productive to work in the transformative setting where colleagues prize the insights and perspectives of each other and care enough to deliberate with honesty and passion over matters of consequence.

To be transformational and enact an ethic of caring does not mean all is quiet and peaceful. Indeed, there is wonderful growth involved when we bring the best of our diverse minds to the examination of what happens in classrooms, in curriculum design and development deliberations, and in rethinking our assumptions about students and how they learn. To honestly engage the issues and problems necessarily means that differences of belief and reasoning will emerge. The challenge in a professional culture is to engage the issues and problems openly and fully while also caring about others and demonstrating democratic principles in action (i.e., full regard for diversity, for deep deliberation, and for consensus building—the win/win perspective described in Chapter 6 of this book).

Building trusting relationships is very hard to do in a place controlled by top-down expectations, by undermining and self-serving conduct, and by a lack of celebration of successes. But it is doable. Indeed, this book is filled with ways to initiate collaborative problem solving, joint planning of curriculum and professional development, and consensus building. I am particularly pleased with the curriculum-centered professional development section in Chapter 7. Indeed, one could argue that the entire work is curriculum centered.

Another valuable aspect of this work is the array of rich resources the authors have brought to bear as they set out their perspective and illustrate what the emerging practices can be.

Finally, although they illustrate the principles and constructs of their perspective on leadership, the authors do not prescribe simplistic rules or practices. Indeed, they close several chapters with questions designed to invite the reader to imagine how humane leadership and transformative cultures might play out in their own school contexts. How appropriate to use questions rather than rules of conduct.

Joe and Janice bring extensive experience and thoughtfulness to this work. They are not pie-in-the-sky people who think that if we are just nice to each other, everything will be fine. They are tough-minded, thoroughly

grounded in theory, research, and practice, and street-smart about the ideas they ask us to consider. What is so refreshing is that they center their effort on the Humane Dimension. They ask us to be mature professionals and care about each other as we wrestle with the problematics of school life and educational activity. This is why this book is so valuable to all of us.

—*Richard Hawthorne*