

Foreword

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Models of leadership abound; it seems that any new model can be formed by simply inventing an adjective to preface the word *leadership*. Is “collaborative” leadership the new fad? It may well be if it takes all the old notions and merely repackages them under a slightly new hierarchy. It may well not be, if it distills an essence of “working together” with direction—but then we have had distributed leadership, transformational leadership, and so many more models that are based on working together. Peter DeWitt is quite specific about what he means—leaders need to be actively engaged in the learning process and enhance the instruction of all in the school to deepen learning for all (including their own learning).

Thus, “collaborative leadership” embodies the instructional focus, the deep and mastery notion, and the self-learning notion but centers on enhancing learning. The focus is not how we teach, who we teach, or what we teach but a balance between directing all to focus on enhancing learning. To know and maximize our impact! It begs the “impact” questions: “What do we mean by impact in this school, what is the desired impact we are aiming for in this school, and how many students gain this desired impact?” Impact should never be a neutral word but should be based on a collective understanding across the teachers (and also preferably across the students) about what it means to be “good at” something in this school. What are exemplars of a good grade five, of a good English

assignment, of a good production for this student at this age or phase of their learning—and most importantly is this notion of impact a shared understanding? One of the greatest issues in our schools is that teachers so often do not share common conceptions of challenge, progress, or expectations. Thus, it can be random whether students thrive or stall depending on the conceptions of their teacher.

To share these conceptions requires excellent leadership. It requires building trust, it requires skill at conducting debates about shared notions of standards, it requires assembling multiple sources of evidence from teachers illustrating their notions of their expectations and standards, and it requires gentle pressure relentlessly pursued (as Michael Barber often claims). This notion of “collaboration” is the focus of this book.

In a recent meta-analysis, Rachel Eells (2011) found that teachers’ collective efficacy has a very high relation to student achievement—across subject areas, when using varied instruments, and in multiple locations. Indeed, it is the new #1 of all the 200 influences I have investigated as part of Visible Learning (Hattie, 2009, 2012, 2015). Albert Bandura (1997) defined *collective efficacy* as “a group’s shared belief in its conjoint capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required producing given levels of attainments” (p. 477). Certainly, there is a cycle here, in that having higher collective efficacy needs to be supported by evidence of actually having an impact on student learning—which in turn fosters teachers’ personal sense of efficacy, their professional practices, and their collective beliefs with their colleagues that they can actually make a major difference (Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2004). There needs to be a sense of shared agency to make this difference, an agreement with group goal attainment, and a high level of trust among colleagues.

Note, the key is “teachers’” collective efficacy, thus a major role of school leaders is to keep a focus on this. How do we make transparent the collective notions of expectations, and as critical, how do we feed in the evidence of the impact of these expectations to further continue the cycle of showing that these

expectations can be realized? The leadership role does not stop at building beliefs; they must then be enacted and fed back into the cycle, and there needs to be between-school triangulation that the local set of expectations are high and realizable.

Christine M. Rubie-Davies et al. (2012) have documented that teachers who hold high expectations typically do so for all students, and those who hold low expectations typically do so for all students—and both are successful in their respective ways. The high-expectation teachers have larger impact, the low kept their students low. She has investigated the classrooms of these teachers, followed them through the school year, and amassed a powerful defense of the importance of high expectations. It is likely to be no different for school leaders in their leading the narrative among their teachers about collective efficacy.

But there are many other aspects of leadership that must be present to ensure that the focus is on the collective impact of all adults in the school on the depth and mastery of their students. This is the strength of this book: the six influences that matter.

In this book, Peter DeWitt speaks of “flipped” leadership—which to me is akin to being clear about “success criteria”—making these transparent, making these criteria about learning, and making these shared. It means starting where the teachers are in their thinking, striving for continuous improvement, and then focusing on how to do it (see “The Cycle of Collaborative Leadership” figure in Chapter 5, p. 111). It involves “meet, model, and motivate,” developing student assessment capabilities so that they too are part of this debate (and know how to interpret their own progress).

But “flipping” is not enough; there then needs to be a sustained concentration on seeking the evidence of the impact of the adults in the school. Not in any one way or overusing test scores or effect sizes (although they are part of the equation), but in many ways—privileging student voice about their learning, using artifacts of student work to show progress, and most of all, hearing how teachers share their thinking about where

they are now, how they are going, and where they are going next. It involves clarity about diagnoses of where students are in their learning cycles, having multiple interventions to move them from where they are to where we want them to be, and continually evaluating the efficiency and effectiveness of these interventions. To use an acronym, teachers are to DIE for (Diagnoses, Interventions, and Evaluate).

But we add Peter's notion that the core business is learning—and this applies to the teachers and school leaders as much as for the students and parents. We know from an enormous research base that the most powerful impact of parents is their encouragement and expectations for their children (much more than financial resources, socioeconomic status, and parental involvement in schools). Thus, leaders have work to do with their teachers to show parents their own high expectations and have parents share, support, and realize these expectations. It is thus no surprise that there is a chapter on feedback and how to ensure that it is not only given appropriately and in a timely manner, but that we concentrate on how our feedback is received by teachers, students, and parents—and of course received by leaders about their impact. Developing and maintaining high expectations and the ability and willingness to receive feedback are core tasks for successful leaders.

Underlying this model of collaborative leadership is the building of trust. Trust can be considered the willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the confidence that the other part is benevolent, honest, open, reliable, and competent (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015). Such trust is often a victim of high stakes accountability, not present when a principal focuses on “outside school” issues and whenever the politics of distraction are the narratives within and across schools (Hattie, 2015). Megan Tschannen-Moran and Christopher Gareis also noted that when the adults in a school trust one another, they are more likely to extend trust to their students as well; but distrust breeds more distrust. The development of trust starts with caring or benevolence, leading to a genuine care for the development of learning. School leaders thence win the trust of their teams through their willingness to extend

trust, “which is evidence through openness, influence over organizational decisions, and professional discretion. Teachers see principals as trustworthy when their communication is both accurate and forthcoming” (p. 261). When a high level of trust prevails, a sense of collective efficacy follows.

The school needs to be safe and fair to welcome each teacher’s beliefs and expectations. It is worth noting that this trust is fundamental also to the therapeutic process. In this literature it is often called the client–therapist alliance (Bachelor, 2013), and we could rephrase it as the leader–teacher–student–parent alliance. One of the more consistent findings in the therapy literature is the low association between clients’ and therapists’ perceptions, showing important differences between the therapist and clients’ views of the alliance. It is converging perception of the trust in the relation that is key to positive outcomes. This convergence is across many dimensions: the collaborative relationship, the productiveness of the work, an active commitment to their high expectations agreed in the school, the trust bond, and confidence in the learning and teaching process. Trust underpins the collaborative behavior necessary for cultivating high performance.

Peter is a friend and colleague; he is among the many who successfully implement the Visible Learning model in schools (Hattie, Masters, & Birch, 2015). He has written on flipped leadership and safe schools, has been a principal, and is among the best communicators (see his EdWeek blogs for evidence of this). These traits are present on every page—enjoy.

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