

# 1

---

## *Changing School Culture*

### *An Introduction and Overview*

The message of this book for principals is research based and practical. We argue that school leaders must move beyond the current pressure to place exclusive priority on curriculum and instruction and, instead, focus on integrating and focusing the fragmented subcultures that exist in any school. It is the influence of peers, parents, colleagues, and community that creates a fidgeting, rebellious student or a burned-out and cynical teacher. Nothing inherent in a classroom creates these realities, nor can classroom teaching alone cause them to disappear.

*Intensification of leadership* is our term to describe an approach to changing the cultural conditions that affect teaching and learning. We are not advocating the abandonment of instructional leadership; principals clearly need to understand and support what teachers do in classrooms in order to help create the conditions that allow them to be more effective. Intensification of leadership acknowledges the existing reality that there are already multiple leaders in any school, and offers a road map to integrate these influences into a more coherent and less contradictory message.

There is a fundamental problem, however: you cannot control your school's culture. Most of the people—teachers, students, and parents—who collectively determine what the school's culture is like have limited incentive to listen to you. Managing a school's culture is not dependent on

the *authority* that you have based on your position, but can only be affected by increasing your *influence* over behaviors, beliefs, relationships, and other complex dynamics present in the school that are often unpredictable.

Before we begin to examine schools that have made lasting cultural change, we offer a caveat. It is beyond the scope of this effort to assess the issues of changes in educational policy or public attitudes that provide the backdrop for principal's work but over which they have little influence. Nor do we deal with schools in crisis; those in which academic performance and teacher morale suggest a need for a dramatic "fresh start." The issues we address will be those facing the vast majority of "typical schools" and "typical school administrators."

There is a tradition in the school reform literature that treats elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools as if they are vastly different places. While this is true when the discussion focuses on specific curricular or instructional strategies, such as the efficacy of early reading programs or AP coursework, our research (and that of others) suggests that schools have much in common. Every principal faces similar challenges when faced with changing the "way we have always done things here." It doesn't matter if an elementary school adopts 4-block reading or a high school implements block scheduling, school leaders will face similar forms of resistance, skepticism, and challenge. The old adage that high schools teach subjects and elementary schools teach children is countered by the finding that grade and other teams exert influences in elementary schools that can be every bit as powerful as those of departments at the secondary level.

To illustrate our approach, throughout the book we will consider cases drawn from real schools and principals who have done things right—or were blindsided by unanticipated events and consequences of their own actions. The authors of this book are researchers who have collectively spent more than fifty years trying to understand the world of teachers, administrators, and students. To understand these worlds, and to seek solutions to problems of practice, we have grounded our approach in organizational and management theories that were not specifically written for education. We have also been in the classroom and have worked directly with many schools and educational professionals, so we have the capacity to pull what is relevant from this broader and more abstract base. We hope that a novice school leader will find our analysis and recommendations useful to guide beginning efforts to take a more active role in shaping school cultures. We also expect that expert, experienced school leaders will read this book and find it affirming as they see themselves in our vignettes and recommendations.

This chapter will introduce the key assumptions, concepts, and topics that serve as the basis for the remainder of the book. How we perceive the nature of school culture is central to developing an intensification of leadership to change that culture. Just as physicists sometimes conceptualize light as a wave and sometimes as a particle, we will describe school cultures as both stable and fluid. We will introduce the acronym PCOLT to describe three key conditions for creating constructive school cultures: *professional community*, *organizational learning*, and *trust*. At the end of

the chapter, we will discuss the allure of the “quick fix” and explain why culture change requires moving beyond a fixation with short-term improvement, whether in achievement scores or in attendance at back-to-school night for parents.

## SCHOOL CULTURES: STABLE AND FLUID OR STABLE AND FRAGILE

During the twentieth century, principals were held responsible for organizing schools to ensure that curriculum and instruction were effectively supervised and that the “core business” of school organization was protected from disruption. A primary role of principals was to keep teachers buffered from the distractions of the external community. By focusing attention on what occurred *inside* the school, it was reasoned that school principals could manage the day-to-day events of the school in a manner that optimized student learning.

However, recent research has begun to shift attention away from the maintenance tasks of school management to focus on school leaders’ responsibility for creating cultures that are innovative and adaptable. Our own work on professional community, which was initially developed in the early to mid-1990s, exemplifies both the increasing emphasis on continuous improvement as well as the need for principals to build and solidify more dynamic relationships among educational professionals. In other words, we affirmed the primacy of *leadership* in shaping the culture within the school.

By looking at culture through the lens of Edgar Schein, in which culture has three layers—artifacts, espoused values, and fundamental assumptions—we propose a framework of leadership and management that is particularly conducive to effecting change (Schein, 2004).

A school’s culture is characterized by deeply rooted traditions, values, and beliefs, some of which are common across schools and some of which are unique and embedded in a particular school’s history and location. Culture informs the ways in which “things get done around here” and, just as important, frames how change efforts are perceived. Based in accumulated experiences, a school’s rules and regulations, policies and procedures, whether written or informal, are the lasting artifacts of old organizational lessons. Here’s an example:

### ISOLATION AT CORSON MIDDLE SCHOOL

Several years ago, as part of a shift to a middle-school structure, Shirley Preston, the principal of Corson Junior High School, was asked by the district curriculum director to create interdisciplinary teaching teams for all fifth- through eighth-grade students. Prior to the

*(Continued)*

(Continued)

new district policy, departments had significant influence over teaching and, by all measures, they functioned well. Department members met regularly to discuss curriculum and instruction as well as to troubleshoot observed difficulties in learning. Trust was high both within and among departments, and members enjoyed strong professional and personal relationships. The district predicted that the shift to interdisciplinary teams would go smoothly since so many foundational teaming behaviors were in place. From the start, however, the shift to interdisciplinary teams went poorly. Teachers resented their lack of involvement in the original middle-school decision as well as the changes required of them. Old relationships suffered and new ones were slow to form. Rather than the communal focused meetings that were the norm under the old department structure, interdisciplinary team planning time quickly evolved from conflict-riddled gatherings into brief perfunctory conferences. Teachers began to close their doors to each other and individualism became normative as trust eroded. Years later, the culture at Corson Middle School still suffers from this transition. Innovation is isolated and rare, and the middle-school ideal of teaming is virtually nonexistent.

Conversely, we have been in many schools where trust is high, communication effective, openness is encouraged, and dissent and conflict are viewed as opportunities for creative problem solving. The culture is a positive force for reform. In these schools, students and teachers can be seen engaging in practices that encourage learning. These kinds of practices are examples of Schein's "artifacts" of culture and exemplify the ways in which culture can be stable and positive. These artifacts are covered in more detail in Chapter 3, where we present a framework of leadership and management behaviors that are particularly conducive to effecting change.

Yet stability, even in a positive culture, is not enough to foster lasting improvement in school organizations. Consider the case of Corson Junior High, where the decision to move to a middle-school model was based on a thoughtful consideration of the research on early adolescent development and learning. The principal might have expected some reluctance to change, but she also expected the positive artifacts of the old stable structure to emerge intact in a radically new educational structure. The greater the structural change, the more likely tacit assumptions will surface in unanticipated ways. It is when change occurs in an organization that the change agent finds out if the culture was stable and fluid—or stable and fragile. As schools seek to develop cultures that are both stable and fluid, they must search for ways to both surface that which they believe is important and allow for new futures to be imagined.

Corson's principal was surprised that the positive, stable culture at her junior high school became fragile when confronted with fundamental change. If she had worked with the staff to give them opportunities to

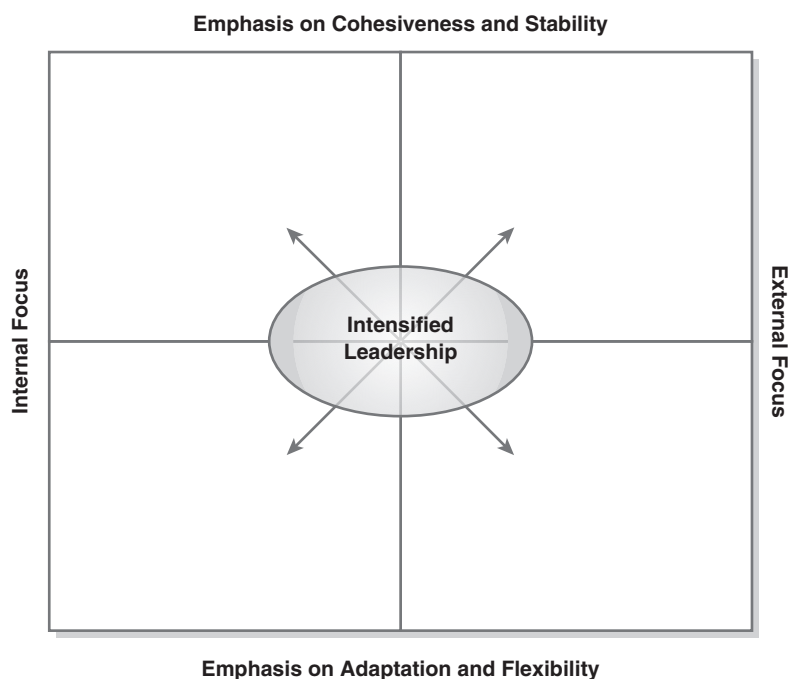
make the new structure their own (and perhaps integrate some of the expertise that existed in the departments), could the interdisciplinary teams have struggled to find a new way of working? If the district curriculum coordinator had encouraged teachers to take responsibility for designing a school program that provided students with an interdisciplinary and personalized experience, but allowed time for within-subject curriculum development, could the transition have been managed by the staff themselves? Would providing opportunities in which tacit assumptions and values were surfaced and explored have helped to provide a bridge between what was culturally valued in the old structure and a dream for the new one? Culture is too complex to follow a static blueprint for change. What seems stable may shift as the social equations the actors have taken for granted are altered. Culture always will be the creation of its participants in response to each other and outside stimuli. For a culture to remain adaptive and fluid, the participants must have a hand in creating the new structures that grow out of the old. We hope that our book will provide you with the understanding and tools needed to develop strategies for addressing similar issues in your school.

One function of culture is to provide meaning and self-esteem, but a positive school culture does this as it improves organizational performance. This requires the principal to balance several foci. If the stakeholders in a school cannot take ownership of a change process, then self-esteem will be preserved by some form of blame on “the idiots that did this to us”—thereby absolving themselves of responsibility.

Figure 1.1 suggests that leadership in schools must balance an emphasis on creating stability and change, and between tending to the internal functioning of the school and paying attention to relationships with stakeholders outside.

We know that the typical principal will look at this figure and groan that it’s just too much. Research suggests that this sense of overload is based on the real explosion of expectations and tasks for school administrators (Cooley & Shen, 2003; DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003). We agree with the typical principal: the leadership job that we have observed in today’s schools is ever larger and ever more complicated, and no one person or administrative team can do it all. But rather than dividing up the existing leadership pie among more people, we suggest that the size of the pie also needs to be increased to include new tasks that are just beginning to emerge.

An up-to-date principal will have been inundated with popular and professional literature that emphasizes the need to set priorities and focus on instructional leadership. This usually means challenging teachers to improve curriculum and instruction, spending more time in classrooms, and mining data to provide evidence of how well the school is achieving its student-learning goals. Also, they also have to spend their time working on goals that are more clearly connected with more general school

**Figure 1.1** Organizational Culture and Leadership

climate, meeting state requirements, discipline, and organization (Whitaker & Turner, 2000). Studies of how effective principals operate when there is a high demand for change suggest that effective leaders enact six functions (Heller & Firestone, 1995):

1. Providing and selling a vision
2. Providing encouragement and recognition
3. Obtaining resources
4. Adapting standard operating procedures
5. Monitoring the improvement effort
6. Handling disturbances

A quick perusal of these functions suggest that some involve maintenance (for example, providing encouragement or handling disturbances), while others emphasize change (selling a vision and adapting school procedures).

Changing a school's culture to balance stability and change is not an easy task. A principal's ability to shift from the traditional internal priorities of curriculum, instruction, and maintaining a smooth and orderly environment is limited both by time constraints and the expectations of teachers. Current leadership literature suggests that there are solutions, such

as establishing teacher professional learning communities and encouraging peer consultation and coaching, that can augment the principal's instructional role, but, without a great deal of attention to roadblocks and details, can easily be perceived as another temporary innovation that will pass (Hord & Sommers, 2008) or even what Andy Hargreaves calls "contrived collegiality" that is manipulated by administrators for their own purposes (Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990). Changing a school's internal culture demands that designated school leaders have real partners within the professional staff and that teachers want and exercise influence in areas outside the classroom.

In addition, resilient school improvement is more likely to occur if the principal focuses not just inside the school but also on redefining the relationship between *school professionals and their communities*. Evidence is increasing that effective school leaders are engaged with their local context and make student learning a task that can be supported by many. Principals occupy a singular position that permits them to act as boundary-spanners, creating solid links between the school (the primary site of formal student learning) and the community (the primary site of informal student learning). Creating bonds with other educators outside the school, through principal networks and more collaborative relationships with district office staff, can serve as a significant source of stimulation and reflective administrative practice. (We address these issues in Chapters 5, 6, and 7.)

Our perspective is broader than just increasing parental involvement or creating linkages with community service agencies, and we reject the dominant belief that interactions with the community should be driven by a public-relations focus that emphasizes successes, downplays failures, and limits transparency. Based on research, which we review in Chapter 7, we argue that the school's interpretive frame should shift away from looking at the community as a resource to support teachers and classrooms toward seeing it as a locus for student learning and development. In fact, we argue that deep-seated changes in the culture of schools are unlikely to occur without action to create more fundamental bonds with the community.

Creating community bonds and building trust with immediate stakeholders is no longer enough to ensure sustained support for a particular school and public education in general. Principals are increasingly expected to be entrepreneurial and to develop new alliances that can help schools meet their goals for student learning and development. Images of schools as full-service providers of health and social service care are plentiful in the school reform literature, and principals are looking for partners in business communities and other agencies to develop new programs ranging from on-site preschools to networks of service learning and internship opportunities. Never before have schools felt such pressure to support healthy youth development—at the same time that they are mandated to raise test scores. Most surveys do not measure the attention that principals give to this part of the job, and those that have indicate that principals still give this part of the job limited priority (Goldring & Hausman, 2001), but our informal observations suggest that this demand is increasing. This represents a

dramatic shift in school culture because it changes the dynamic from one that is focused on students in classrooms to one that emphasizes the connections of the school with the wider world of foundations, business groups, social service providers, and government agencies.

## INTRODUCING PCOLT—PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY, ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING, AND TRUST

School administrators are not anthropologists; they are concerned with school cultures as a means to positive outcomes. This book focuses on the cultural attributes of schools that create better opportunities for the students who attend. Thus, improving culture is not an end in itself, but the means by which school leaders can address the goals of student progress and achievement. Three features of school cultures that have been tied to student learning in multiple studies are:

1. *Professional community.* Professional community (PC) directs a spotlight on the relationships among adults within the school. By focusing on the structural and human resource conditions necessary for schools to become strongly connected around the goal of student learning, the framework suggests that strong school cultures are based on shared norms and values, reflective dialogue, public practice, and collaboration (Louis & Kruse, 1995). The essence of professional community is that all adults in a school are presented with the opportunity to work with others to grow and change—and that meaningful and sustained connections are necessary for that to occur. This occurs when teachers take collective responsibility for improving student learning. Collective responsibility, in which all members feel accountable for all students, is at the core of intensified leadership.

2. *Organizational learning.* The concept of organizational learning (OL) suggests that continuous improvement through collective engagement with new ideas will generate enhanced classroom practices and deeper understanding of how organizational improvement occurs. The idea is frequently coupled with that of professional community in programs that are designed to create more visible “professional learning communities” (Hord & Sommers, 2008; Stoll & Louis, 2007). However, not all group learning occurs in organized meetings, and we wish to emphasize the uncertainty of predicting which structures and experiences will produce the “aha moment” that helps to shift the culture from old to new values, beliefs, and practices. Seemingly random contacts with novel ideas, as well as structured efforts to examine data and plan new programs, may produce forward momentum. OL focuses on the ways in which new ideas are brought into the school organization, how they are considered and evaluated, and the ways in which school organizations retain and use the



knowledge generated from them. Organizational learning generally occurs when groups acknowledge small failures and consider alternatives, and this occurs more often when more people take responsibility for problem finding and problem solving (Levitt & March, 1988).

**3. *Trust.*** Trust is the glue that holds social networks and relationships together. In schools, trust is considered to be the result of several dispositions working in concert. Among these are integrity (or honesty and openness), concern (also called benevolence or personal regard for others), competence, and reliability (or consistency). Trust is also low in schools that feel beleaguered by public pronouncements that they are failing—not a message that is designed to create positive collaboration. Trust has been linked with organizational effectiveness in business settings; in schools, trust among teachers and between teachers and other groups is linked to higher student achievement (Tschannen-Moran, 2004). While principals cannot bear full responsibility for creating trusting cultures in their schools, their behavior sets a tone and a foundation for creating trusting relationships and professional community in other groups (Bryk & Schneider, 2002).

These ideas are increasingly familiar to school leaders and teachers, and many programs and staff development opportunities are designed to increase principal's ability to work with them. However the assumptions underlying PCOLT stand in stark contrast to the deeply embedded understanding of many school professionals about how schools should operate. Dan Lortie observed that teachers generally assume that they will work alone rather than with other adults, that the difference between their work and administrator's work constitutes a bright line that is seldom crossed (Lortie, 2002). Thus, there is a chasm between professional aspirations for dynamic and caring cultures and the reality encountered by many principals when they arrive at the schoolhouse door each morning.

Our research suggests that while many schools are working hard to develop school cultures characterized by professional community, organizational learning, and trust (which we refer to as PCOLT), there is a great deal of variation in the degree to which they have shifted their values away from older mental models. Cultivating these values can be a juggling act, and, as shown in the Corson example, a solid, positive culture can quickly erode when confronted with change. Our argument is that principals and other school leaders can guide their schools toward this goal and, once the school is moving in the right direction, help to sustain the momentum.

PCOLT is most powerful when the ideas that underscore each of the themes are viewed as strategic actions to build strong adaptive school cultures. Furthermore, our thinking positions PCOLT as an enduring approach to leadership behavior and temperament. Building a strong school culture is not something you do once, nor is PCOLT something you can claim to become—it is an orientation toward school leadership that sets the stage for achieving your goals for student success.

## INTENSIFIED LEADERSHIP: AN INTRODUCTION

Employing PCOLT strategies requires a different kind of school leadership. We choose to call this form of leadership *intensified* because it increases the number of people engaged in leadership roles and the scope of the school's work as it relates to student outcomes. Other words been used to capture the changing nature of leadership in contemporary settings, ranging from shared leadership and site-based management, to servant and distributed leadership. Intensified leadership builds on the insights of these models.

Shared leadership and site-based management in most forms are limited to involving a variety of stakeholders in making decisions (Bauch & Goldring, 1998; Leithwood & Duke, 1998). Servant leadership, as a critical concept, emphasizes the role that formal leaders play in supporting the goals and work of others (Block, 1993). Mayrowetz and his colleagues distinguish between two ways of thinking about the distribution of leadership in a school. One *describes* how influence operates in schools—who has it and under what circumstances (Gronn, 2000; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001), while the other *prescribes* sharing leadership as a means of reallocating the work of school improvement (Mayrowetz, Murphy, Louis, & Smylie, 2007).

In our view, the term *intensified leadership* combines both the descriptive and prescriptive perspective, and it unavoidably includes elements of shared and servant leadership. It assumes that *there is deliberately broadened meaningful involvement*—through job redesign and through the permanent redistribution of the work. It goes beyond saying that people will see their work as encompassing more tasks. By deepening their *collective responsibility* for finding and solving problems, selecting tasks and foci, people become more accountable for meshing the larger goals and vision of the school with the smaller tasks of daily leadership and management. Thus, it goes beyond simply giving the school's work to more people, and demands that all members of the school community become active decision makers. The implication is that there is no longer a single leader, or even a small leadership team. Intensified leadership suggests that leadership roles must meaningfully and purposefully be inhabited by the many. What this means in practice will become apparent as we present cases of leadership intensification through the remainder of the book.

Our notion of intensified leadership challenges the seductive image of the heroic leader. Traditionally, a hero or heroine “leads” by making critical decisions concerning organizational vision and goals, and sets a clear path for their attainment. Heroic leaders are portrayed as knowing the right thing to do and exactly when to do it. By making decisive choices and providing directions for others to accomplish these goals, heroic leaders motivate others to achieve success. This traditional representation of leadership positions the heroic leader as more intelligent, charismatic, and

insightful than other members of the organization and holds the leader ultimately responsible for the success or failure of the organization. While the scholarly literature has trumpeted the demise of heroic leadership for several decades, the popular press continues to demand it and replacement terms such as “transformational leadership” (Bass, 1998) and “superleadership” (Manz & Sims, 2001) do little to dispel the largely patriarchal image.

The problem with viewing leadership in this way is simple—it can’t work in today’s schools. The issues schools face are too complex, the pressures of day-to-day operations too complicated, and the stakes too high to suggest that an all-knowing leader—or even an all-knowing superleadership team—can succeed. Furthermore, this conception belies the truth of how school organizations work. From the office assistant who chooses to spend time with a parent new to the district, to the classroom teacher who chooses homework assignments, important decisions are made at all levels of the organization on a daily, even hourly, basis. In reality, leaders who attempt to lead heroically reduce the effectiveness of their followers, overburden themselves, and impair the organization’s ability to respond adaptively to issues that may arise.

In contrast, *intensifying leadership* suggests that rather than focusing energy in one location or person, leadership is enhanced by the interaction and networking of many organizational members. By expanding the conception of who leads to include teachers, parents, and the wider community, schools have the potential to better meet the challenges they face. Intensifying leadership highlights the notion that leadership can be viewed as the intellectual and social outcomes of a group of *interacting individuals*. One prominent researcher likens this kind of leadership to a network of influence in which formal positions are less important than the belief by others that each person makes a difference (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001). Another proponent of this perspective argues that the need for intensification demands a different “architecture” for school organizations that abandons the image of vertical authority (Gronn, 2000).

Rooted in communal action, intensified leadership suggests that when organizational members work in concert with each other they can pool their individual knowledge and expertise, resulting in better outcomes. Furthermore, intensified leadership is more than empowerment of individuals to complete specific tasks. The empowerment literature emphasizes the transfer of existing decision-making functions from school leaders to teachers through new special roles or structures in which teachers can exercise influence (Marks & Louis, 1997). While it is argued that sharing decision-making responsibility within the school will augment traditional leader influence, the size of the leadership pie usually remains the same. Intensified leadership opens the boundaries of leadership to include, in ongoing and permanent ways, a wide variety of members of the school and the surrounding community in new decision-making roles,

and it asks them to become involved in generating new kinds of decisions and practices rather than simply carrying out existing functions. Jobs and roles are enlarged, and the range and type of decisions that can be made at all levels and by a variety of parties is increased. In this way, intensified leadership acknowledges that *expertise is distributed across the school organization and beyond*.

## INTENSIFICATION AND BEYOND QUICK FIXES

We are familiar with the ways in which leaders can be seduced by the notion of a “quick fix” because we ourselves have held administrative positions (although not as principals). Opportunities to hear the latest expert abound; leadership and management texts offer appealing new insights and concepts. Methods for collecting and analyzing data roll out of state departments of education with alarming regularity. Technology is touted as the answer to the variety of instructional and leadership woes plaguing schools today. Furthermore, the pressure to raise test scores by the next test seems almost unbearable.

We sympathize with superintendents who ask for professional learning communities to be implemented in all buildings within the next month and arrange for a one-day workshop to ready the district. We understand why school principals use one-hour faculty meetings or single-day retreats to brainstorm about developing strategic plans designed to improve student achievement. We empathize with teachers who report that they intend to implement the new instructional practices but are observed to be lacking core skills to do so. We understand why schools hope that a good curriculum map inevitably will show the way to changes in classroom practice.

A good friend of ours refers to the smorgasbord of choices available to school leaders and teachers as “random acts of staff development” while another views both staff development and new policies as the “spray and pray” approach to school improvement. When people are frustrated and worried, they often look kindly at almost any idea that seems to have potential—or they may reject all ideas as “something we’ve tried before.” When people feel discouraged and distracted, they hope that the additive quality of their efforts will create results. More often, the accumulated mountain of initiatives only leads to innovation fatigue.

However, we argue that, like the old adage, “if it seems too good to be true, it is,” most new programs and staff development products won’t take school leaders to the places they wish to go. Lasting change in school culture takes time, but without those changes, efforts to improve student learning are likely to be temporary. Real change in culture also requires more than time; it takes sustained effort focused on clearly understood and commonly shared goals and values. Embracing quick fixes fosters a belief in leaders that they are doing the best they can for the students in their schools. Instead, they often weaken the school culture’s ability to engage

in real change by nurturing pipe dreams. We shall explore briefly some of these false hopes.

**1. Cultural change can occur quickly with new, enthusiastic leadership.** As we have discussed, organizational cultures are deeply embedded in the practices and policies of the school. Though all members of a school organization might agree that change is needed, new and unproven policies and practices will be viewed skeptically. Even when cultures are viewed as negative, people would much rather “stay with what they know” than change. The insecurity of the unknown always makes the known a better bet. For these reasons, initiating cultural change is a slow, adaptive process.

**2. Culture change can be stimulated from the outside through new policies.** Inasmuch as culture is rooted in internal beliefs and values, it is resistant to external influence. Simply put, internal change may be stimulated from the outside, but it must be nurtured internally. State and even district policies lack the leverage and credibility to create the conditions of community, learning, and trust needed to foster real cultural change. This helps to account, of course, for the tangible variability in school cultures that often occur within any but the smallest districts. We are not arguing that districts and states have no influence on schools—there is plenty of evidence to indicate that they affect both practices and basic assumptions. However, more than policy or leadership change is needed for districts to have an impact on a school’s culture (see Chapter 6).

**3. Teachers and administrators should make the decisions—school culture should be dominated by professional values.** An aspect we argue in more detail in Chapter 7 suggests that unless we engage the external school community in matters of school reform and innovation, schools cannot enjoy the broad support needed to be successful, nor are they fully capitalizing on their available resources. While schools may temporarily be able to insulate themselves from community pressures, they rely on establishing trusting relationships on an immediate practical level (voting for school funding). It is the longer-term impacts that are most important for this book: Schools that have trusting relationships with parents show greater student achievement gains according to a number of scholars (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Developing shared values with the community, even when members of the community are of different races and have lower educational levels, is essential to creating supportive learning environments in the home and community.

**4. More teamwork will create better school cultures.** Clearly, teamwork matters. A hallmark of strong culture is communal activity toward shared goals. However, to mistake efforts to create teamwork for activities related to classroom teaching and learning activity is foolhardy. Teams can help to focus on the work creating improved outcomes for students, but they may also become competitive and distract teachers’ attention from

schoolwide goals and practices. Teams, like other school structures, need to be integrated into a network of relationships that may be less cohesive, but support a broader school improvement culture.

*5. Changing the school's mission and vision is the key to changing behavior and beliefs.* Missions can be motivating and introduce a new vocabulary and ideas to stimulate talk. Their impact on culture is often, however, limited to providing superficial understandings of complex ideas. When we adopt slogans about practice rather than real changes in practice, little changes. People's behavior and beliefs change when they engage in sustained learning that challenges their assumptions and provides better avenues to achieve results. As Peter Gronn pointed out some time ago, talking is at the center of this kind of administrative work. Leadership is exercised largely through informal communications rather than through significant decisions (Gronn, 1983). The centrality of sustained communication is emphasized by Schneider and Hollenczer (2006) as a critical tool in managing the simultaneous need for stability and fluidity, and managing the boundaries between external and internal pressures.

## **SUMMARY AND OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK**

Culture change requires sustained effort, over a period of years, that is broadly distributed throughout a school and that centers on the combination of values and behaviors that allow teachers and administrators to make good choices during the very busy workdays that they always encounter. It requires spontaneous leadership actions as well as long-term strategic choices (more on this idea in Chapter 2); it requires the ability to address both the big picture and short-term demands simultaneously (more on this idea in Chapter 3). When schools attend to those aspects of their internal cultures that impede their ability to create community, learn together, and engender trust in each other, improvements in the outcomes for students are evident. But principals cannot do this alone or only in concert with the teachers in their building. The connections between leadership and culture change are further explored in Chapter 4. Principals also need colleagues and a professional network in which they can become reflective learners (more in Chapter 5); they need to be more strategic and effective in working with their district offices (Chapter 6), and in developing true partnerships with their parent and community stakeholders (Chapter 7). In Chapter 8 we return to our theme, and discuss how the themes and examples from the individual chapters are related to the work of school principals.

## **RECOMMENDED READINGS**

Because this book is about leadership and change, we strongly recommend that you browse some of the following, which are among our favorites

dealing with this topic. These books were selected because they contain durable ideas that will, especially if they are considered together, push almost anyone's ideas about change management beyond their current boundaries. In addition, they are all good reads and, though based in research, reflect an understanding of the problems of practice.

Bennis, W. (2000). *Managing the dream: Reflections on leadership and change*. New York: Perseus.

*Every leader needs to be familiar with Warren Bennis, whose contributions to understanding modern organizations are without parallel. He is a former university president as well as a decades-long advisor to CEOs, and this book is a collection of some of his previously published writing on change.*

Fullan, M. (1993). *Change forces: Probing the depths of educational reform*. New York: Falmer.

*Michael Fullan is the foremost synthesizer of research on educational change. This book, which is the first (and we think still the best) of his series on change forces, outlines what we know about managing change in school settings. The second book, Change Forces: A Sequel, and the third, Change Forces With a Vengeance, elaborate on the ideas presented in this early book, and are also worth looking at. This book is, however, the most practical, and if you haven't read it, you should!*

Hall, G., & Hord, S. (1987). *Change in schools: Facilitating the process*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

*The authors of this book provide a useful theory of how individual change occurs during an organizational change effort. Their first perspective, Levels of Use, emphasizes the importance of gauging school-level change by understanding individual levels of familiarity and competence in taking on new behavior. The second perspective, Stages of Concern, looks at the emotional aspects of change. The models have been developed as both research and monitoring tools over many years, and are used throughout the world.*

Kotter, J. P. (1996). *Leading change*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.

*John Kotter's book is one of the most popular among managers in the private sector. While not all business management texts are relevant to school administrators, this book provides an excellent overview of basic principles that we think are particularly relevant for principals. His discussion of how to generate "short-term wins" is an important antidote to long-term strategic plans that often weigh heavily on a tired change master.*

Kouzes, J. M., & Posner, B. Z. (2002). *The leadership challenge*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

*This is a good companion book to Kotter's because we consider them the best of the popular general management books that emphasize the role of leadership in*

*change. Clearly there are differences between business and school settings, but both of these books provide pointed summaries of what is known about strategic approaches to change. We particularly like Kotter's emphasis on how to provide a compelling vision for change and how to encourage people in the organization to come on board. Kouzes and Posner use their deep experience to succinctly outline the challenges of leadership, summarizing the qualities that help guide the personal traits that leaders must draw upon, and the way in which these qualities need to be expressed in order to motivate and encourage others. Both books focus on practices that can easily be adapted to educational settings.*

Louis, K. S., & Miles, M. B. (1990). *Improving the urban high school: What works and why*. New York: Teachers College Press.

*This is the only one of our recommended books that uses a lot of data—but it nevertheless develops a practical approach to managing the beginning stages of change when there are few resources, some hostile circumstances, and a sense of cynicism and fatigue among faculty members. While it is fifteen years old, the case studies of five high schools are not particularly dated.*

Sarason, S. (1996). *Revisiting "The culture of the school and the problem of change."* New York: Teachers College Press.

*This is a revision of Seymour Sarason's classic work on what needs to change in schools if student experiences and learning are to improve. Rather than looking at the quick fixes, Sarason concentrates on the basic features of school culture that make real change difficult. While this is not a quick read, it is essential for change masters who want to develop their own checklist of what needs to be altered in a school before significant change can occur. This is one of the few classic writings on change that pays a lot of attention to student experiences.*

Schmoker, M. (1999). *Results: The key to continuous school improvement*. Arlington, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

*This is the text for school leaders who want to understand what data-driven decision making can actually do for their schools. Mike Schmoker provides practical examples of what needs to happen before the school can become a real learning organization. His focus on using data positively is a welcome antidote to the sense that data are largely used to punish schools, teachers, and students.*

Weick, K., & Sutcliffe, K. (2001). *Managing the unexpected: Assuring high performance in an age of complexity*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

*An invaluable tool for principals who are trying to create real change in classroom practices and student experiences, while at the same time working effectively within a results-based accountability environment. The emphasis on continuous improvement is a refreshing alternative to change management books that emphasize only transformation and "big, new thinking."*



## ANALYZING YOUR SCHOOL

### Identifying Internal and External Foci

Consider the external and internal foci present in many schools. Identify how often each plays a role in your school. Then identify if this is work you are currently doing as an individual or as part of a leadership team. Circle those areas in which you might consider intensifying your leadership.

<i>Internal Foci</i>					
	<i>Daily</i>	<i>Weekly</i>	<i>Monthly</i>	<i>Individual</i>	<i>Team</i>
Student behavior and discipline					
Curriculum adoption and implementation					
Managing relationships with parents					
Managing faculty and staff relationships					
Budget and budget planning					
School improvement and change agendas					
Vision and mission setting					
Accountability and testing					
Scheduling and building operations					
Supervision and coaching					
Planning for professional development					
<i>External Foci</i>					
Community contacts and relationships focused on issues or events within the school					
District office meetings					
Participation in district office initiatives					
Networking with other professionals					
Countywide or regional meetings					
Working with community groups on non-school-related issues					
Working with social workers or community health professionals					