

# Introduction

Educators as well as school leaders are very busy and have to meet mandates and accountability measures at the same time as they negotiate their way through a more connected learning environment. Time constraints and initiative fatigue are seen as some of the barriers to new learning, so instead of piling one more thing on an already full plate, this book looks at innovative ways to shift our thinking, and refocus the ways we communicate with one another.

That is what is meant by the term flipped leadership. One example of flipped leadership is about making faculty meeting discussions more authentic. To that end, information is sent out ahead of time so teachers can prepare before a discussion takes place, with the result that everyone can go deeper with their learning.

The technique of flipped leadership can be used for any building or district level meeting, but just as important, it can be used to communicate with parents. In a time when parents want to know what they are paying for, as they cart their children from one activity to the next, flipped leadership allows leaders to give their parents a window into the world of their children. It helps promote school events, highlight special visits, but can also give a view into a day in the life of their child. For parents who cannot make it to school often, it gives them a topic to discuss with their children at dinner, but it also helps them understand that school has changed from when they were students. In a way, it makes school visible to parents, and it helps engage them in the school community.

As a school principal, I initially used flipped leadership on a whim because I saw the benefits of the flipped classroom. I hoped teachers would embrace it, and after a bit of work they did, but I had no idea that the day I took a risk and flipped my communication to parents that this was an idea to help build stronger communication between our school and parent community. I'm profoundly happy that I took the opportunity to flip my leadership. I hope that this book inspires you to take a risk, flip your leadership, and experience the exciting results.

## LEARNING INTENTIONS

By the end of this book you will

- understand what it means to be a connected leader,
- understand the meaning of flipped leadership,
- develop an understanding of why connected education is so important to our flat world,
- understand the importance of flipping your leadership,
- learn how to flip your faculty meetings and parent communication, and
- learn how to make learning visible (Hattie, 2009) to the school community through flipped leadership.

### "Old School" Leadership Communication

- Sending out monthly newsletters to parents, which is one-sided communication that tells them what we want them to know about school.
- Scheduling one open house at the beginning of the year where we tell parents what our expectations are for their children . . . and of them.
- Establishing a one page faculty agenda filled with a checklist of items that range from district initiatives to important dates for the faculty meeting. A meeting that usually ends with all parties heading in different directions, both logistically and philosophically.

- Relaying one size fits all e-mails to staff outlining the rules, what needs to change, and how to change it.
- Performing classroom visits that focus on what the teacher is doing, and not what the students are learning.
- Expecting students to be quiet in the hallway, and enforcing compliance among students and staff.
- Being the dean of discipline. Finding yourself at risk of always being reactive to events that take place in school.
- Focusing on monologue—a characteristic of old school leadership . . . instead of finding ways to engage in dialogue.

## Connected Leadership

- Understanding that important educational topics can come up more often than at one faculty meeting per month.
- Sending out articles or inspiring blogs before a faculty or grade level meeting so everyone can discuss the information when they get together.
- Moving beyond surface-level information to always questioning whether we went deep enough with our discussions.
- Developing building goals that focus on collaboration and innovation, not compliance and rule following.
- Engaging in educational discussions every day of the year using different mediums of communication.
- Modeling the proper use of technology to students and teachers.
- Drawing evidence-based observations using a tablet, which not only reduces the time it takes to complete an observation by half, but symbolizes to students and staff that adults use technology too.
- Performing classroom visits that focus on student engagement in school, and also student learning.
- Engaging families by using technology in a variety of innovative ways.

- Flipping the educational conversation on its head so that all stakeholders feel as though they have a place at the table.
- Taking pictures of students learning, creating a five minute video, and sending it home to parents.
- Recording a video that focuses on new initiatives like the Common Core State Standards, and sending it home to parents a few days before Open House so they can come to school with questions.
- Sending report cards home a few days before parent-teacher conferences so they can digest the information and come prepared with questions.
- Making all stakeholders feel welcome at the same time we make learning visible to all of them.
- Understanding that our professional and personal lives thrive on connections.
- Building a professional learning network at the same time as we build a personal learning network.
- Using technology tools to be proactive in your leadership practices in order to spend less time being reactive.

*That is where flipped leadership enters the leadership paradigm.*