CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

You see, you closed your eyes. That was the difference. Sometimes you cannot believe what you see, you have to believe what you feel. And if you are ever going to have other people trust you, you must feel that you can trust them, too—even when you're in the dark. Even when you're falling.

—Mitch Albom, *Tuesdays with Morrie: An Old Man, a Young Man, and Life's Greatest Lesson*

"**O**ur principal plays favorites, so I am not sure if his evaluation of my teaching is based on actual data or on his impression of me." "How can our principal evaluate our teaching when she only comes in our room one time a year, and the rest of her time is spent in her office with her door shut?" "My principal rated me lower on professionalism because of a parent complaint. But what about my side of the story?" These statements are taken from actual teachers who participated in a survey on trust in their principal (Arneson, 2011a).

The relationship between school principals and teachers is a crucial one for school success. While principals have traditionally been expected to be the school's managers, the principal's role is evolving into a role more accurately described as instructional leader and formal evaluator of teacher practices. For the teacher evaluation

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process to be effective, teachers must trust the principal's capability and integrity. Likewise, principals need to be able to trust that teachers will hear what they have to say when given honest feedback. Some will say, "Oh, but as long as the principal is trained in using the evaluation model objectively and free from bias, there should be no need to examine trust." The principal's ability and competence in using the evaluation is one factor. The amount of integrity a principal has and uses when observing and evaluating teachers is another factor, and I argue that, in many cases, it is the most important factor. It is also a factor that is difficult to measure. How do you measure how much someone is trusted? How do you really know how much trust is felt in schools? This book will examine those and many more questions.

The new look at the role of principal is a change in the public education system. Covey (1989) defined seven habits that highly effective people use to facilitate change and improve leadership in an organization. One cannot stress enough the importance of forming relationships, building trust, and creating an emotional bank account between people. After studying and using the work of Covey for years in my own administrative experience as a principal, I wanted to study the formation of trust between principal and teacher. I defined and explored trust within the context of competence and character using Covey and Merrill's (2006) trust model. In addition, I also addressed the question of whether there is a relationship between length of time the teacher and principal work together and the perceived level of trust that teachers feel toward the principal. Finally, and in many ways most practical, I asked teachers to identify principal behaviors that would lead to greater trust.

Educational research has the propensity to revolve around the strategies of teaching, methodology of concepts, and management of classrooms in K–12 settings. However, since the principal of a school is the educational leader and, therefore, expected to model effective instructional strategies as well as good communication with parents and positive student interactions, principals and teachers must form a relationship built on trust in order for schools to be truly successful. Trust is an understudied issue. If trust is not present in principal/teacher relationships, it is to the detriment of the schools in which they work. In the United States, a Harris poll

in 2005 indicated that only 22% of participants trust the media, 8% trust political parties, 27% trust the United States government, and 12% trust big companies. Only 36% of employees believe their leaders act with integrity (Covey & Merrill, 2006). With these statistics, administrators and school policy makers cannot afford to neglect the aspect of trust. By measuring teacher perceptions of trustworthiness in principals, researchers (Clark & Payne, 2006) can highlight and address leadership strengths and weaknesses, thereby improving school success.

The relationship between school principals and teachers is critical because principals are no longer simply managers of the school building but are performing teacher evaluations that, in many instances, impact teacher pay. For the process to be effective, the principal must be competent and filled with integrity. Some will say, "Oh, but as long as the principal is trained in using the evaluation model objectively and free from bias, there should be no need to examine trust." I beg to differ. In almost every district I visit, the question is raised: Can all the training in the world help a principal truly remain objective?

In schools across the country, the shift of principal roles is from principal as manager to principal as instructional leader. For school communities to make good use of this new type of authority, the quality of relationships will play a major role (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). In light of new teacher evaluation systems basing a percentage of teacher pay on student performance, the trust in school administrators is more critical than before. Districts are using Charlotte Danielson's model of effective teaching, Marzano's (2003) teacher evaluation model, a hybrid of the two, or some other approved system. The district in which I did my research used the evaluation system based on Danielson's (2007) model of enhancing professional teaching practices, defined by four critical domains of the teaching practice, including planning, classroom environment, instructional practices, and professional responsibilities. The evaluation system in many states across the country requires administrators to observe every teacher in the building at least once a year, a significant paradigm shift from the days of tenured teachers in Florida only needing to be observed every 5 years when their teaching certificates were due for renewal (Roberts, 2011). This shift in practice, alone, is enough to raise the hackles of some seasoned teachers who cry

out, "Why should we have to be observed every year? Why has it been good enough until now but not good enough any more?" This book does not attempt to address the why's of accountability but rather begins with the point at which we find ourselves: We are here, we are using a new system of evaluation. Now, how are we going to make it more effective, objective, and reliable?

BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM

At the beginning of workshops I teach on communication and trust, I often put a speech bubble up on the board with the words, "We have a new evaluation system." I ask participants to think about how they feel about the words in this sentence. I then ask folks to turn and say the sentence to a neighbor. "Say it how you feel it," I ask. I listen in, intent to find some varying example, which I always do. I then play Man on the Street, during which time I ask for volunteers to share how they said the sentence. Inevitably, I can find folks who say the sentence with sarcasm dripping from their smiling voices and others who say it with resignation in their voices and, finally, that group of people who may have perhaps already had too much caffeine that morning who say it with joy and opportunity in their voices.

With the increasing accountability expected from teachers, it is important for principals to help teachers feel more supported to keep quality teachers in the classroom (Rowland, 2008). Danielson (2007) suggests that the observation and evaluation process, typically performed by the principal informing the teacher of strengths and weaknesses of the lesson, should be more collaborative and that this collaboration is going to require trust. As one teacher shared with me, "I am used to the principal pushing the observation form to my side of the desk and asking me if I have any questions. Questions? I thought you would have questions for me about how I make decisions about my teaching." Zimmerman (2003) notes the importance of trust in any principal/teacher evaluative process, so now is the time for administrators to refine their relationship-building skills. Daily interactions in schools need not be dominated by interpersonal conflict, cynicism, and mistrust (Feltman, 2009). Trust impacts schools every day of every year in every relationship and every communication encounter. In every school district in which I consult, teachers

and principals express without abandon the concerns they have about miscommunication, tension, mistrust, and more.

Covey (1989), through his seven habits of highly effective people, has aided many business leaders in transforming themselves to encourage growth in the members of their organizations. Schools are not unique in that regard. Major corporations and small businesses around the country have their share of office politics, leaders playing favorite, and misunderstandings that turn to all-out conflict. I've written this book specifically for school leaders, however, because I feel that we are in the business of growing and developing the next generation of adults. My husband and I often play the game of asking, "Would you want this person taking care of us in the nursing home someday?" But it isn't really a game, is it? Growing and developing caring and respectful and thoughtful adults is serious business. And our students watch the staff in the school each and every day. They watch us to see how we are going to handle conflict and other problems. If our students are going to take their lead from us, hadn't we better get it right?

The relationship between principal and teacher is delicate in nature as the principal typically serves as the primary evaluator for the teacher's performance. The relationship, by its very nature, is unbalanced in power. For the teacher to hear what the principal has to say regarding performance, progress, goal setting, and growth, there must be a relationship that allows for effective communication to take place. In workshops across the country, I ask principals, "Do you want to be right or do you want to be heard?" (Arneson, 2011a). The idea behind this is there are two people in the room, both wanting to be heard and both having needs that must be met. Focusing on being heard versus only being right assumes that we are willing to hear the other person as well, not just stamp our foot in our "rightness." In order to do this, we have to possess the willingness to believe that someone else might have a thought that is equally as important to hear as our own. Teachers must believe the principal is fair and equitable in his or her evaluation of teachers' capabilities. Trust is a major factor in relationship building, just as mistrust is a critical factor in the breakdown of relationships.

Contrary to myths about trust being slow to form, nothing seems to be as fast as the speed of trust. I found in talking to teachers around the country that they are quite willing to trust their administrators from the outset. The problem comes in when trust has been

violated or is perceived to be violated. The speed of mistrust appears to be rapid, as well. The good news is trust can be created where it is not currently present, but it can also be destroyed where it currently exists. Vodicka (2006) identifies the four elements of trust as (a) compassion, (b) consistency, (c) communication, and (d) competency. Compassion is the caring for other individuals that is central to a trusting relationship. Vodicka says consistency was prevalent in most of the definitions of trust but feels consistency itself was not enough to generate trust. Vodicka found communication to be important as well since leaders whom teachers identified as being open found it was a strategy that bred trust. Competence implies reputation and affiliation, but producing positive results is likely the best determinant of competence.

E-Cubed: Effective Evaluation Example

How do you characterize trust? On which factors
do you feel trust is mainly based?

Feltman (2009) describes trust as taking a risk in exposing oneself and being vulnerable to another person. The four distinct aspects of trust are care, competence, reliability, and sincerity. Feltman describes care as a willingness to show concern for another. Feltman defines competence as the ability level demonstrated to others. Reliability connotes the trustworthiness of a person to do what he or she said he or she would do. Sincerity is also known as authenticity (Feltman, 2009).

Covey (1989) believes individuals form emotional bank accounts with every encounter they have with another person who makes either a deposit or a withdrawal with each meeting. If a principal and teacher have a good relationship, the principal is able to share criticism with the teacher (a withdrawal) and still have enough money in the bank to weather the withdrawal. If the relationship is uncertain or one in which the teacher does not feel comfortable sharing his or her weaknesses or vulnerabilities, there is no savings available from which to withdraw. Trust is easy to lose and hard to regain (Reina & Reina, 2006). Indeed, trust has the potential to create success, but its power is so often underestimated. I often ask workshop participants to imagine a coworker with whom they possess a high level of trust.

I then ask them to characterize what working on a project with that person looks like. They often will say things like "it's easy," "it's fun," "time flies when we work together," and "I don't have to second guess what I am going to say." Working with people whom we trust makes work simpler and more enjoyable.

How, then, do principals and teachers build up this trust and emotional bank account with one another? I asked which factors teachers believe are trust builders between teachers and principals. In addition, I asked whether principals' character or competence matters more to teachers. Additionally, I explored the influence of the length of time a teacher works for a principal from the perspective of trust building.

A Framework of Trust

Covey and Merrill (2006) say trust takes time to gain but takes no time to lose. Trust is expensive in terms of cost to a school or other organization when it is lost. Trust is a matter of confidence, and if the staff members in the school do not have confidence in the leader or the school, then distrust and suspicion will reign. Likewise, if staff members feel mistrust for one another, working together becomes more cumbersome. There are four core components of credibility: high integrity, good intent, excellent credentials, and a good track record. They believe the first two, high integrity and good intent, make up the construct of character. Good credentials and a good track record, on the other hand, make up the construct of competence. They theorize all four, or rather both competence and character, are necessary to build trust. In a time in which principals are being asked to evaluate teachers in such a way that impacts pay, tenure, etc., it is incredibly important that we achieve a balance of competence and character.

A Problem of Trust

The relationship between principal and teacher is a critical one to study if teachers are expected to collaborate with their administrators on issues of best teaching practices, teacher evaluations, parent relations, and student success. If teachers are expected to improve in their job performance, particularly if their compensation is going to be based on effective teaching practices and student achievement, educators and administrators must establish an effective working relationship. Since the principal of a school is the educational leader

and, therefore, expected to model effective instructional strategies, good communication with parents, and positive student interactions, a relationship built on trust between principal and teacher must form. Trust within an organization such as a school aids in the success of the school and the stakeholders. Factor in the potential complications and new learning involved in the shift in teacher evaluation systems, and the necessity for trust is greatly increased.

It is, therefore, pertinent to examine the characteristics that foster the relationship of trust between principals and teachers as well as between staff members themselves. Since the sharing of best teaching practices has been shown to have a profound effect on teacher growth, it is incumbent upon school leaders to help foster a sense of trust within the school and between teachers.

Also, Covey and Merrill (2006) suggest in their theory of trust that character and competence have equal impact in determining teachers' trust in principals. However, I wonder if one element may be more significant than is the other. Equally important is determining if the length of time the principal and teacher have worked together impacts the level of trust. Other factors notwithstanding, does a teacher who has worked for a principal for 1 year trust his or her principal differently than the one working for a principal for 10 years? The ramifications will most assuredly influence the success of teacher observations and evaluations.

Leadership and School Reform

In response to the growing need for school reform because of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 (National Conference on State Legislatures, 2006), the role of the principal is changing and must continue to further evolve. School reform demands a culture of collaboration and relationships between school leaders and all stakeholders (Sergiovanni, 1995), and this collaboration will require building and maintaining relationships. Bryk and Schneider (2003) said trust will be the uniting feature for school reform and, therefore, is an important concept to study. I couldn't agree more. As much emphasis as we place on test scores, we should at least give that much credence to the aspect of trust in school settings.

R. Jones (2007) found a need for placing greater emphasis on leadership as a critical role for effectively changing how schools are led. Rothenberger (2008) found leadership behavior within an organization

could be classified in terms of the power of relationships between leaders and employees. Leaders who remain in control by wielding their power over employees in the school will likely be viewed quite differently than leaders who gain the trust and mutual understanding of the stakeholders in the school. Margaret Thatcher once said, "Being powerful is like being a lady. If you have to tell people you are, you aren't." Shared leadership breeds shared relationships. Farmer (2010) said the importance of leadership behaviors was found to have a significant impact on teachers' attitudes toward teaching. Teachers were more likely to have better degrees of self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation when they perceived their principals to value core competencies such as reflection, inquiry, instructional leadership, and learning communities. Likewise, school leaders are more likely to be successful if they are working with staff members who are willing to trust each other and in their leadership.

Uses of This Text

While it is crucial to have a leader who is trustworthy, competent, and character filled, one person does not make or break the school culture. Staff members have an integral role in supporting one another and supporting the principal in the development of trust. Communication and honesty are critical for sharing concerns with grade level mates, other teachers in the department, between teachers and classroom assistants, and everyone else involved in the school. While much of my own trust research was based on teacher trust in the principal, I will spend time talking about how teachers can discover new ways to interact with one another to foster a maximum amount of trust. School leaders might use this book as a book study, stopping at regular intervals as well as at each "E-Cubed: Effective Evaluation Example" to consider their feelings and progress on each area of trust and communication. Each box is also designed to give a quick takeaway from the previous section or perhaps a little nugget of advice we can each use in our work starting immediately.

Defining Trust

Before we delve too deeply into trust, we must realize a true definition of trust needs to be established among stakeholders in a school. After all, how can we work toward something we haven't

defined? Tschannen-Moran (1998) defined trust as the willingness to be vulnerable to another person who is open, honest, reliable, and competent. Trust can also be described as having an emotional bank account with another person. The account is available for deposits that occur when someone does something that adds to the trust between the two people. In talking to educators and school leaders across the country, I have come to define trust as *the ease with which we believe in, rely on, and have faith in the idea that the other person is going to do what he or she says.* And, the proof is in the pudding. One cannot simply say they will do something or that they believe a certain way. We will truly trust when we see the person actually walking the walk, not just talking the talk. When trust is present in relationships, communication is made easier, on all levels. We feel more comfortable in opening up and showing a bit of vulnerability. Take the classic example of a breakup in a relationship. After such a breakup, one might find it difficult to open up or share themselves with another person. Much like a flower that seems reluctant to open its petals or a turtle too shy to stick its head out of the safety of a shell, we may have learned and evolved to be cautious in opening up to others after being hurt. But, little by little, if we are willing to dip just one little tippy-tippy toe into the water of vulnerability to another person, we often find the water becomes warmer and safer as we go. Take the examples, below, of dipping toes in the water of trust.

"My principal made my day today. He supported me, totally, in a very difficult parent conference."

"One of the teachers in our school came to me to discuss a concern instead of taking it directly to the teacher's union. I think she believes we can work it out together."

"My grade level mates and I disagreed on the appropriate way to handle a curriculum issue, but we all agreed to disagree, and it all worked out in a win-win fashion."

These are all actual examples of trust, expressed from teachers and principals in schools across the country.

One of the premises of the emotional bank account is the recognition that at some point in every relationship, we are going to make a withdrawal. In other words, at some point, we are going to mess up

in our communication, honesty, or support. When that happens, if we have enough deposits, there is no reason our relationship should go into the red and be completely overdrawn. We may have to make a few more trust deposits before feeling our relationship is back to normal, but the overall trust shouldn't be jeopardized if the bulk of the account has been based on deposits. It is important to know which actions, behaviors, and characteristics make up a holistic approach to trust. Schools can start by having a group conscience, in which everyone is allowed and invited to contribute to what defines trust for them. Finding a common definition of trust is quite likely to spur the school staff into getting on the same page.

A great starting place is to ask: *If our school was the illustration for the definition of trust, what would people see (hear, feel) when they walked through the doors of our school?* Once those actions, behaviors, and characteristics are named, then staff members can begin exploring what strategies will help to achieve that point. For example, if most everyone includes the action of "telling the truth, even if it's difficult to hear," which many respondents to my surveys said, then the group can begin to build in strategies to encourage that behavior. One strategy schools have found helpful to encourage telling the truth, no matter what, is to share success stories of when this has paid off.

For example, when I was a guidance counselor and taught lessons on character education in every elementary classroom, we would always talk about honesty. Someone would always say something like, "But if I tell the truth that I broke the lamp in the living room, I'm going to get in trouble," to which I would do my level best *not* to reply. Instead, I would invite comments from other students in the class. Inevitably, several students would have good news stories that ended in, "My mom wasn't happy, but she said since I was honest, she wasn't going to punish me." Some savvy student would likely even say something like, "Even if you have to deal with the consequences, you can still sleep at night because you did the right thing."

A school is the ultimate example of a system at work. While my study focused mainly on what teachers said they needed in order to trust in the administrator, staff relationships play a pivotal role in the way a school is able to function. In other words, a good school climate may start with a good leader, but everyone has a role to play in this system. In a marriage, husbands need to do things to make

marriage better. Wives need to do things to make marriage better. But systemically, if everyone is not at least on the same sheet of music, the marriage is not likely to last past the end of the song.

In a school system, when leaders and staff members are not on the same page, every effort to make the culture better in schools will be made monumentally more difficult. When communication, honesty, and support are present, the school becomes a second home and an enjoyable haven to come to every day. In essence, the system feeds itself into a safe, healthy, and more content loop. And a trusting system is what is necessary for successful implementation of the teacher evaluation process.

Since relationships and trust between principals and teachers are fundamental components of the operations of schools (Bryk & Schneider, 2002), it is incumbent upon school leaders to determine what level of trust exists in schools and to work to improve the current level of trust. The study on trust between principals and teachers (Arneson, 2012) allowed me to determine if competence or character plays a larger role in the determination of overall trust teachers perceive in principals. In addition, I solicited teacher input about the principal behaviors teachers feel most determine the level of trust they feel for the principal. The resulting behaviors were then categorized into themes. These behaviors were compiled into a list of best practices for administrative leadership classes and for principals new to the field to learn what builds trust. Seasoned administrators feeling the growing pains of a new evaluation system will benefit greatly by hearing from teachers what is likely to build trust. This list was expanded to include what teachers and other staff members can do to improve trust in their school. The best practices are the strategies that encompass the remainder of the book, allowing principals and teachers a firsthand look at what is needed in order to trust, particularly in the area of observations and evaluations, and the steps they can take to get there.

This book calls us to address the elephant in the room. The elephant in the room is the thing everyone recognizes, but no one wants to admit is a problem, for fear it might cause too much tension to address it. The irony is everyone is likely talking about the elephant in the room to their close friends and family members (i.e., "No one at my school trusts one another" or "We feel like we are always the last to know" or "Our principal is really sweet, but I'm not sure I can trust he's doing the best things for me to grow, professionally.").

People are just often extremely nervous about addressing the elephant head on, preferring instead to talk about the issues as if they aren't staring us straight in the face.

In fact, we not only must acknowledge and address the elephant, we must also engage the elephant. Let's address the tension and not ignore it. Miscommunication is one of the elephants in the room—it gets in the way of teacher evaluations, progress on professional goals, and a safe morale-filled environment in which to work. How often have you encountered good educators who would be willing to be more reflective on their teaching practice, if only they felt a sense of comfort with their coach, mentor, and yes, even the principal?

We can engage the elephant and make evaluations and the inner workings of a school environment much more pleasant by highlighting strategies for better communication, honesty, and support.

SOLUTIONS

I recently read a quote that says, "Speak in such a way that others love to listen to you. Listen in such a way that others love to speak to you." What a two-way-street way to look at communication. This is what communication and relationships are all about, right? I believe, in my heart, we all want this type of synchronous relationship with those with and for whom we work. The solutions and strategies proposed in this book are based soundly on this belief that we can improve communication if we simply value it and nurture it.

Some of the strategies might appear to be based on common sense. In fact, that may be partly true, but the strategies are also based on research that allowed teachers to voice their opinions about what they needed in order to be fully committed to this evaluation system that, in many cases, is the impetus for teacher pay and bonuses. Communication and trust will be the cornerstones to the success of such a new system.