The School Leadership Landscape

Leadership is the second most influential school-level factor on student achievement, after teacher quality (Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Waters, Marzano & McNulty, 2004). Effective leadership inspires school transformation and instructional best practices that lead to student success (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). Principals positively shape school culture when they distribute leadership and build learning communities of self-directed professionals who assume responsibility for ongoing innovation in their teaching (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010). School leaders have a great opportunity to impact student growth and achievement by shaping a culture that cultivates motivated, engaged, and effective teacher leaders.

Many additional factors, however, influence the success of a school, such as teacher quality, parent involvement, and human and fiscal resources. Furthermore, political agendas drive policies that impact our schools. Equity and access continue to be misunderstood and neglected because the center of the education conversation remains focused on competitiveness in the global marketplace. Accountability has become the nostrum to ensure that every child achieves school success and graduates career-ready, often neglecting how we can develop schools’ capacities to achieve these desired results (West, Peck, & Reitzug, 2010). Academic achievement is the vehicle at the heart of this current crusade to reform education; however, we must be mindful of the development of students’ character, cooperative spirit, and sense of purpose and responsibility—the capacities for life success. Without these important life skills, too many young people continue to fail in our systems: socially, emotionally, and academically.

A nation’s belief about the purpose of school shapes the policies that drive curricula and instruction, but school leaders’ beliefs and capabilities are central to shaping the culture that makes it happen. It is essential that we invest in high-quality leadership development to create and sustain school cultures that cultivate administrator and teacher leaders and school success (Patti, Holzer, Stern, & Brackett, 2012; Sparks, 2009). In this chapter, we introduce leadership development that is anchored in the five core competencies of social and emotional learning (SEL): self-awareness, social awareness, responsible decision making, self-management, and relationship skills (Weiss-
berg & Cascarino, 2013). We describe how this type of social, emotional, and cognitive development can prepare school leaders at all levels to facilitate and sustain systemic change in schools. We provide a theoretical basis for this work and propose four core leadership skills: actionable self-reflection, facilitating and engaging in conversations, building generative relationships, and systems thinking. Finally, we offer guidelines and recommendations based on a promising model that builds the individual and collective capacity of all stakeholders to lead schools and sustain systemic change. We conclude the chapter by addressing some problems and pitfalls that may be encountered while pursuing this path of leadership development.

Current Trends in the Preparation of School Leaders

To date, no magic bullet has been found to attract and prepare the best and the brightest to become effective school leaders. Extensive field-based experiences supported by site-based mentoring or coaching continue to be among the most desirable approaches for aspiring leaders’ development, but the costs to sustain such models limit their availability (Mitgang & Gill, 2012, p. 12). Furthermore, fewer people strive for the position of principal, with its heavy accountability markers tied to student achievement on standardized tests and expectations of school “turnaround”, often within a year of stepping into the leadership shoes (Byrne-Jiménez & Orr, 2012).

As the role of school leaders in improving student learning has become paramount, so too has the importance of their development. School leaders must master a plethora of skills, from teaching and learning to management and community outreach. To accomplish effectively the wide gamut of tasks required, the school leader should encourage collaborative leadership structures that include teachers and staff (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008). Over two decades of research support the notion of shared leadership (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Minckler, in press; Senge, 1997). In order to truly share leadership, leaders build social capital; they motivate and develop potential leadership candidates from within their staff to be able and willing to take on responsibilities and assume leadership roles (Minckler, in press). School leaders must be cognizant of this need when they hire staff members. Additionally, they must foster collaborative networks of people who contribute to all aspects of the mission of the school. Successful implementation of any reform, including collaborative leadership structures, is influenced by the perceptions of subgroup members who feel they have access to resources and expertise outside their own subgroup (Pennel, Fishman, Yamaguchi, & Gallagher, 2007). This bodes well for school leaders who have the skills to transform a school’s culture into a community of continuous learners based on sharing resources through collegiality and trust. The traditional leader, who drives change from the top, often creates change-resistant organizations by failing to tap the leadership capacities of people at all levels within the organization (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008; Senge, 1996, 1997; Spillane & Diamond, 2007). Decades of research support the notion that transformational school leaders—leaders who motivate and enhance others’ growth—are best positioned to create a culture that supports needed change (Minckler, in press). The link between transformational leadership and emotional intelligence is growing (Hackett & Hortman, 2008), but the research base on emotional intelligence and educational leadership is still in its nascent stages, with much of it based on individuals’ self-reports. Cook (2006) examined the relationship among 143 elementary school principals’ self-ratings on the Emotional Intelligence Appraisal, which measures four of the five SEL core competencies (self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, and relationship management) and a locally developed leadership improvement tool, which assesses leadership in nine areas: (1) leadership attributes, (2) visionary leadership, (3) community leadership, (4) instructional leadership, (5) data-driven improvement, (6) organization to improve student learning, (7) organization to improve staff efficacy, (8) cultural competence, and (9) education management. All of these, except for cultural competence and community leadership, were significantly related to principals’ self-assessments of their emotional intelligence.
Hackett and Hortman (2008) explored the relationship among principals’ emotional dispositions and leadership skills using the self-report version of the Emotional Competence Inventory–University edition (ECI-U), a measure of emotional intelligence competencies, and the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), a measure of transformational leadership behaviors (Bass & Avolio, 2004). They found significant positive correlations between four of the five core competencies, particularly the social and relationship management competencies, with one or more of the five transformational leadership scales. Stone, Parker, and Wood (2005) also explored the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and aspects of school leadership. They wanted to identify specific emotional and social competencies required of principals and vice-principals that would lead to their success in meeting the demands and responsibilities of their jobs. Their sample comprised 464 principals and vice-principals from nine school boards in Ontario, Canada. The leaders who were designated as above average leaders by supervisors and staff scored higher in the four broad EI dimensions of intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships, adaptability, and stress management, and in overall EI than did those who were considered to be below average leaders.

Although development in leaders’ EI is widely accepted as essential to effective performance in global business organizations (Prati, Douglas, Ferris, Ammeter, & Buckley, 2003), to educators, the concept of EI within leadership development is still new. Furthermore, although there are clear national standards for principals (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008), and instructional leadership is essential, it is unclear which leadership skills, once mastered, separate the top performing principals from those who are mediocre or even deficient.

In this chapter, we propose that the development of social, emotional, and cognitive skills is the missing link in school leaders’ preparation. These skills are neglected in leadership development today, despite their ability to transform teaching and learning through the human interactions between school leaders and others. We begin with a brief theoretical foundation to provide the reader with the context that supports this approach to leadership development.

Theoretical Foundation

Leadership development draws from theoretical foundations that include the Great Man theory, which defined the best and brightest leaders as those with inherent abilities, notions about the top-down leader of the early 1900s espoused by scientific management, and subsequent realizations that individual traits impact the leader’s performance and that different situations require different leadership approaches (Bennis, 1959). Work by Wilkins and Ouchi (1983) was influential in stressing the importance that a leader should create a culture of trust and open communication with others, characterized by shared beliefs, values, and goals. Twenty-first century educational leadership theory continues to focus primarily on the leader as a change agent of needed reform in schools to improve instruction and raise student achievement (Hallinger & Heck, 2011). Simultaneously, there is a growing understanding that we cannot change the behavior of schools until we change the behaviors of the people who work in them. We believe that intensive change in school and in student learning will happen when school leaders develop their own social, emotional, and cognitive skills, and build professional capital through the transformation of teachers.

Our work in both preservice and inservice leadership development is informed by the evolution of leadership theory and anchored in four additional theoretical frameworks: adult learning, emotional and social intelligence (EISI), self-psychology, and systems thinking.

Adult Learning Theory

Adult learning theory reminds us that as we mature, our learning is enabled by (1) readiness in different moments of our lives, (2) internal sources of motivation, (3) willingness to be open to new learning and experiences, and (4) application through concrete, practical experiences. Adult learners can direct their own learning when provided with a trusting supportive environment in which they are able to take risks and are
willing to be vulnerable, accept feedback, and try new ways of learning. Kegan’s constructive development theory (Helsing, Howell, Kegan, & Lahey, 2008) reminds us that adults, like children, experience developmental stages ranging from more self-focused behaviors to more complex ways of locating self amid fields of forces and interactions, and placing personal desires in a larger, more service-oriented context. Having an understanding of these developmental stages can help school leaders gauge an approach to working with others to change behaviors and practices. Leading a school means recognizing that people and teams can be at different places in both experience and skills. In turn, this means that instead of one-size-fits-all professional development, effective interventions such as training, coaching, and mentoring must be calibrated for people and teams that are in very different developmental stages and have different needs and skills levels (Helsing et al., 2008).

Social and Emotional Intelligences

Thorndike first introduced the concept of a social intelligence as early as the 1920s (Thorndike & Stein, 1937). In recent years, this intelligence has taken on new meaning (Bass, 2002). Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee (2013) promote the development of several competencies that are aligned with a leader’s social intelligence: empathy, attunement, organizational awareness, developing others, inspiration, and teamwork. These competencies fall within the leader’s social awareness and ability to manage relationships, both of which are critical to success.

EI “involves the ability to monitor one’s own and others’ emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use the information to guide one’s thinking and actions” (Mayer & Salovey, 1993, p. 433). Unlike a fixed intelligence, EI continues to develop from childhood through adulthood. Self-awareness is foundational to our ability to manage our own behaviors and to develop productive relationships (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). The more self-aware we become, and the more we use the data our emotions provide us, the better decisions we can make (Brackett, Rivers, & Salovey, 2011). Our emotional abilities manifest behaviorally in our relationships with others; how we deal with feedback from our supervisors, peers, and those we supervise; and how we manage conflict and stress (Ashkanasy & Daus, 2005). Studies are in progress to further our understanding of the possible links between purposeful social and emotional competence training and effective school leadership.

Self Psychology

Self psychology, as an approach to psychological development, describes a lifelong pursuit of a “nuclear program” that makes use of a person’s innate talents and skills (Kohut, 1984, p. 152) to realize his or her ambitions, mediated by his or her ideals. As a person develops throughout a lifetime and one or more careers, ambitions and ideals that evolve in turn demand that skills evolve as well. Meaningful growth relies on the individual’s innate capacities and developed skills in the context of his or her unique integration of aspirations and values. Helping individuals to recognize their own values and aspirations builds self-efficacy and motivation toward actualizing a personal vision. The self psychology approach builds an empathic relationship with the person being developed; a “moment to moment attunement to unfolding experience, rather than content, facilitates a sense of being understood, which in turn promotes a deepening of self-reflection” (Warner, 2013, p. 69). This is essential in building the trust that leaders need to allow time for reflection.

Systems Thinking

Peter Senge (1996) broadened our understanding of the complexity of schools as a system of many interrelated parts. He referred to a school as a “learning organization”, a collective that shares a common vision for the school and works together to achieve that end. Although we live in social systems, we generally have difficulty stepping back to see how these systems operate as a whole. Systems thinking implies “that the leader (1) examines his own assumptions and is prepared to shift these in pursuit of points of leverage to make improvements; (2) triangulates the data received by involving multiple points of view, collective thinking; and (3) recognizes that short-term
fixes do not solve deep issues. It takes time to develop, apply, and measure the benefits of interventions” (online video clip; Senge, 2012). School leaders who espouse systems thinking think systemically about situations, events, and organizational culture and climate.

Each of the described theories provides a framework for the kind of leadership development that is not happening in the preparation of aspiring and veteran principals—that is, the development of the social, emotional, and cognitive skills that school leaders must include in adult professional development as they set a course to improve the social, emotional, and academic skills of young people. The four foundational core leadership skills described here are derived from the leadership literature, the SEL competence domains, and our experiences in the field of leadership in schools and organizations.

Core Leadership Skills

Moving theory into practice requires the application of skills that are visible in behavior—skills that transform self, others, and the organization. We liken them to the raw material from which the multitude of performance responsibilities and expectations can be accomplished (Waters et al., 2004). School leaders are expected to be able to (1) set a widely shared vision for learning; (2) develop a school culture and instructional program that is conducive to student learning and staff professional growth; (3) ensure effective management of the organization, operation, and resources for a safe, efficient and effective learning environment; (4) collaborate with faculty and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources; (5) act with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner; and (6) understand, respond to, and influence the political, social, legal, and cultural context (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008). To be able to meet these extensive expectations placed on them, school leaders need support in fostering actionable self-reflection, building generative relationships, enabling meaningful conversations, and thinking systemically. These skills, often regarded as the “soft skills”, that lie at the core of our being—the way we think, the way we perceive and interact with others, the way we listen, and our ability to maneuver the daily challenges of the job with professionalism and grace—are foundational to adult performance and success (Brungardt, 2011). Research increasingly indicates that such affective and cognitive skills are essential in K–16 leadership for deeper learning to transpire. “Deeper learning is the process through which a person becomes capable of taking what was learned in one situation and applying it to new situations—in other words, learning for transfer” (Pellegrino & Hilton, 2013, p. 1).

These affective and cognitive skills also lie at the core of effective teamwork, an essential component of leadership (Druskat & Wolff, 2001). As we promote and support SEL instruction for young people, we cannot eliminate the need for adults to model these very same skills. The core leadership skills are inherent in the five core competencies of SEL: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship management, and responsible decision making. Our description of these core leadership skills follows.

Fostering Actionable Self-Reflection

The process of knowing oneself is complex, difficult to measure, and requires dedicated personal work in three aspects: (1) reflection on what matters—our deepest aspirations, (2) reflection on how we make sense of the events around us, and (3) reflection on our emotions. These three aspects of self-reflection become very important to the school leader when they become actionable; that is, when a leader uses the insight he or she has obtained from self-reflection to guide subsequent decision making and behaviors. One example of actionable self-reflection is the personal vision-based process that becomes the foundation for building shared, schoolwide visions (Kantabutra, 2005). Without the inspiration that is garnered from one's personal vision, it is very difficult to motivate others. The simple question “What do I and we truly want to create or achieve?” has great power if explored with discipline regularly. When the collective engages in a process to explore organizational vision, it is even more powerful.
Another dimension of actionable self-reflection is reflective practice with the mirror turned inward, on our mental models: the perceptions gained by one’s personal experiences that may inhibit one’s openness or ability to create needed change in self, others, or the organization. Our perceptions are inescapably shaped by our life experience: our upbringing, culture of origin, and education and professional experience. We inevitably operate, based on our mental models—deep habits of thought and action we have built over a lifetime.

Finally, self-reflection can help us better facilitate our emotions and subsequent actions (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). As we become more aware of our emotional selves, develop our emotional vocabulary, understand the reasons for the emotions we feel, and express and regulate them appropriately, we become more cognitively and emotionally intelligent. Reflection without insight does not lead to changed behaviors (Grant, Franklin, & Langford, 2002). One might simply ruminate about the same thoughts repeatedly with no change, while others might use that reflection to make cognitive-behavioral choices. Unfortunately, the daily demands that are placed on the school principal leave little time for the kind of self-reflection that fosters insight and readiness for change. In a study conducted with 25 nationwide principals, Drago-Severson (2012) found that principals “yearn for regular ongoing opportunities to reflect with colleagues and fellow principals on the challenges of leadership” (p. 2). Yet only three of the 25 principals who participated in the study actually used reflection regularly. Other studies have supported the desire and need for reflection for renewal (Patti, Tobin, & Knoll, 2003). Professional development opportunities need to provide time for individual and collective renewal.

Building Generative Relationships

Effective school leaders’ ability to build positive relationships with and among others has a great impact on the climate and culture of a school, a mediating variable to student achievement. But adult relationships must also be generative, so that adults working together create new and better ideas and solutions about teaching and learning. Generative relationships can occur when teachers participate in well-organized professional learning communities and inquiry groups, in which they explore student work, review professional literature, share successful practices, and seek ideas for improving challenge areas.

Effective school leaders foster a trusting environment that encourages and supports a climate for generative relationships to grow. The leader’s ability to influence, inspire, and create trust impacts the quality of the adult relationships formed—how open they are, how well individuals communicate and coordinate their actions, how compassionate they are, and how they deal with conflict. Generative relationships require that each individual understand, express, and appropriately manage his or her own emotions in relationship with others. It is important to mention critical prerequisite skills for building generative relationships: the ability to be empathic, to actively listen, to hear others’ perspectives, to be mindful, to read faces accurately, and to detect voice tones, to name a few (Goleman et al., 2013). A culture of empathy creates the safety in which generative relationships grow, and in which critical feedback can be given and received, differences are honored, and creativity flourishes.

Enabling and Facilitating Meaningful Conversations

Communication among staff members is often challenging given that teachers spend the majority of their day working directly with students, leaving minimal time for interaction with others. At best, weekly staff meetings address business as usual, rarely leaving time for meaningful conversations that can potentially move the organization forward. Meaningful conversations require dedicated time for sharing ideas and real listening; they encourage differing opinions and conflict that can lead to more productive solutions. First, in order to encourage these kinds of conversations, leaders need to address the delicate balance between providing information, discussion of pressing issues, and dialogues about teaching and learning. The flow of information back and forth between administrators and staff often requires pragmatic action for short-term gains, but members of the school com-
munity need time for reflective dialogue and inquiry about teaching and learning values, beliefs, and practices. These conversations can happen as a whole-group endeavor or work well in smaller learning communities led by teacher leaders who possess strong facilitation skills, a prerequisite for effective conversations. These conversations allow deeper learning to take place and contribute to longer-term solutions and needed change in individual practices (Pellegrino & Hilton, 2013).

Second, meaningful conversations require that leaders demonstrate effective conflict resolution strategies and that everyone in the school undergoes development in the same. Establishing teams to lead inquiry into school-based problem areas without skills development in how to agree to disagree effectively, manage conflict, and come to consensus as needed, will thwart desired results. Empowering staff members with the skills of conflict management is an essential prerequisite to any meaningful conversations. Stepping back and allowing the voices of teacher leaders to emerge will unite the community rather than create the potential to divide it.

Third, leaders need to understand their own conflict styles within different situations and with different constituencies. One way to do this is to use assessment (Thomas & Kilmann, 1978) as a reflective tool to investigate personal conflict styles and explore how they manifest in the workplace. Through reflection with a coach or with trusted colleagues, school leaders exchange stories, recognize that they are not alone, and set goals to improve challenging behaviors while relying upon strength behaviors (Patti et al., 2012).

Fourth, leaders need to participate in active learning, role plays, and simulations in which they enter into difficult conversations and practice reading verbal and nonverbal cues and use language that opens up communication. Simple addition of assertive but nonoffensive language to a school leader's repertoire can be eye-opening for him or her. Effective supervision of others requires expert coaching skills that allow teachers to explore their own strengths and challenges with prompting and guiding, as necessary. Many school leaders use more offensive language that alienates the recipient and reduces the opportunity for effective resolution or change. “It is essential to learn how to have open and effective conversations when there is real conflict”, says Tahoma superintendent Mike Maryanski. “If you cannot do this, you can forget about building a genuine learning culture” (Benson et al., 2012).

**Thinking Systemically**

Thinking systemically involves all of the aforementioned foundational skills and exemplifies the SEL competence of responsible decision making. School leaders adept at understanding the complexity and the interconnected relationships between the independent structures of their organization make decisions that consider the school as a whole. Every area of oversight, from effectively managing financial resources to ensuring student achievement, requires that school leaders see beyond immediate events and transcend the crisis-oriented leadership culture that afflicts many schools and school systems (Benson et al., 2012). With a comprehensive understanding of the system, they scan the school and perceive the needs of the stakeholders and structures—within the interrelated parts of the school's systems. With this skill, school leaders can identify gaps in the systemic structures of the school and build work cultures that encourage collaboration, risk taking, and disciplined reflection for improvement.

To prepare school leaders and their teams to think systemically, they need professional development that asks them to (1) engage in continual exercises that are aligned with their vision and (2) explore their mental models and systemically choose the best strategies for long-term change. This professional development employs three primary modalities: visual (constructing loops and diagrams of the interconnected events in the school); communicative (utilizing common vocabulary, skillful discussion, dialogue, inquiry and advocacy); and active learning (physical challenges, computer modeling, role play and simulations (Systems Thinking in Schools, Waters Foundation, 2014). The strategies acquired within each modality assist leaders with identifying the roots of systemic problems, the potential causes and effects of every aspect of a situation. Additionally, they are responsible decision
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makers as they consider possible ethical dilemmas and evaluate the wide range of perspectives of multiple stakeholders.

Using a multiple-case study design to investigate the use of evidence-based practice in systems thinking tools in two high schools in the southeastern United States, Kensler, Reames, Murray, and Patrick (2012) sought to determine whether school teams adept at using systems tools actually utilize these tools to dialogue about and measure team performance and outcomes. They found that although both schools had systems thinking abilities, only the school in which the principal participated in the professional development made full use of the tools. The results indicated that the school that intentionally utilized the systems thinking tools had 100% of team members fully engaged and committed to the improvement processes, while the school that did not utilize the targeted skills did not establish a culture of trust or develop into an effective community of practice. Systems thinking tools combine both cognitive and affective processes that develop all of the core social and emotional competencies, with a particular focus on responsible decision making.

We believe that the four skills (actionable self-reflection, generative relationship building, enabling and facilitating meaningful conversation, and thinking systemically) should be core elements of leadership development programs for school leaders. These essential skills, when developed, embody the five core competencies of SEL that we know contribute to establishing a climate and culture in which adults and young people can and do learn (Weissberg & Cascarino, 2013). The following section offers some guidelines and recommendations for leadership development based on the cultivation of these four key skills.

Guidelines and Recommendations for Leadership Development

In preservice education at both Hunter College of the City University of New York and the Summer Principals Academy at Teachers College, we have incorporated courses that address specific elements of the theory and core leadership skills discussed in this chapter (Patti et al., 2012). Our inservice development continues to integrate these elements through workshops, institutes, and coaching for school and district leaders and educational organizations. Recent development with school principals and superintendents provided by the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence embeds this deeper learning that we have been discussing throughout the chapter. Similar efforts are unfolding in pockets around the globe, as we recognize the prerequisites for transformational learning. The guidelines and recommendations that follow are based on these experiences and the model of individual and collective development that we espouse. Although the guidelines are presented sequentially, the steps often occur in a more fluid manner based on the readiness level of the school leader and the complexity level of the school.

Guideline 1: Learning in a Safe Environment

Creating a safe climate is essential at the outset of any personal or collective change process. School leaders and their teams must learn in a safe ecology—one that encourages transparency, experiential learning, collegial inquiry, and self-directed learning. The motivation to experiment with new learning, especially new learning that may initially be outside of one’s comfort zone, requires the use of the four core leadership skills addressed earlier in this chapter. Professional development opportunities must foster actionable self-reflection, enable and facilitate meaningful conversations, and build generative relationships and systematic thinking.

Emotional and psychological safety is built by creating a strong mission statement based on common values and norms of behavior by which the community lives. School leaders can facilitate exercises that will identify core values and community norms that become the foundation for the instructional work; some leaders invite an external facilitator to assist them with this process. Leithwood and Jantzi (2000) identify eight dimensions of transformational leadership that offer insight into characteristics of effective school leaders that contribute to an emotionally and psychologically safe learning environment: provides vision and/or inspiration, models behaviors, pro-
provides individualized support, provides intellectual stimulation, fosters commitment to group goals, encourages high performance expectations, provides contingent reward, and strongly encourages individual improvement. Furthermore, leaders create safe and purposeful spaces through countless small acts that demonstrate empathy and compassion, without losing sight of instructional expectations and goals.

**Guideline 2: Building Personal and Shared Visions**

Once a safe ecology exists, the next step is to create or expand both individual and collective visions. The vision directs the work to be done. It is what connects the reality of the present to the intentions for accomplishments in the future. Kantabutra (2005) conducted an extensive review exploring the relationship between vision and organizational performance, postulating that a strong vision should include brevity, future orientation, stability, challenge, abstractness, and ability to inspire. However, the ultimate power of a vision does not rest as much in the words that are crafted as in the commitment to a shared vision. There is a creative process set in motion by the gap between what we aspire to and what currently exists. This “creative tension” is the source of energy in the creative process. Creating a vision forces the capacity to tell the truth about what does or does not exist in the present, and what needs to be done to confront the gap. When working with school leaders, it is imperative to take them through a process of “envisioning.” This can be accomplished in a number of ways with the assistance of a coach or facilitator, using a visualization process that may employ drawn or written reflections. Once the vision is created, it is compared to the current reality and the process of creating change takes place. This essential process for the leader and all members to experience thereby creates the possibility of a shared vision that is passionately embraced by all.

**Guideline 3: Setting Goals Based on Vision**

Visions need to be translated into specific goals that can be tracked and assessed in order to gauge progress and to self-correct. Just as we set goals to improve academic achievement, so too do we need to set individual and collective emotional and social behavioral goals, such as being able to hold difficult conversations without fear or disengagement, or regulating ourselves so as not to interrupt another speaker during a conversation. No matter what the goal is, each individual must attend to the social, emotional, and cognitive skills that may be impeding the accomplishment of personal and professional goals.

Just as with vision, effective goal setting encompasses the personal and the collective. In a school, for example, with a vision of integrating SEL into its culture, a collective goal might include training in conflict management or allowing for time to reflect and share thoughts and feelings on a given issue. Recently, two assistant principals spoke about their desire for goal-focused emotional development. One wanted to develop more compassion when she confronted feelings of frustration, especially when she worked hard and saw others not doing so. The other wanted to develop better self-control when she felt frustrated in certain situations. Both leaders decided to work on their compassion and empathy so they could see the person who was frustrating them in another light, then come up with strategies to deal with the person differently. Each came up with several specific cases in which they had the greatest need to be compassionate and crafted specific ways to respond compassionately so as to anchor their aspirations in concrete behaviors. Furthermore, by working together, they created a mutual support system motivated by common desire not to be overtaken when facing emotional challenges in their new leadership roles.

**Guideline 4: Recognize and Use Social and Emotional Competencies**

Leaders routinely face daily challenges that give them opportunities to apply social and emotional competencies that are otherwise neglected. For example, as principal Susan Ryan prepares to have a difficult conversation with a staff member who has been continuously late to school in the mornings, her self-talk reveals the skills related to recognizing and managing her emotions and
expressing empathy to others that she consciously chooses to use:

“I am really angry at Teacher X, so I need to take deep breaths before I begin and remind myself to breathe throughout the conversation. Teacher X has a hard time listening to feedback, and I don’t want to get exasperated and let my emotions interfere with my ability to think clearly. [So I might say,] ‘Teacher X, I appreciate having the opportunity to hear from you about the issues that you are facing that cause your lateness.’”

Susan’s use of emotional skills arises from a combination of cognitive and affective skills that she consciously employs as a result of her self-reflective process. Sadly, school leaders are often the last people to receive honest feedback to help identify their social and emotional competencies, and their developmental edges. Leaders should seek out strategies that trigger emotional self and social awareness, such as journal writing, visualizations, tuning into one’s self-talk, and taking formal assessments and having honest conversations with trusted colleagues (Patti, Stern, Martin, & Brackett, 2005) to provide helpful insight about individual interpersonal strengths and challenges in the social and emotional competencies.

Guideline 5: Coaching—A Tool for Reflective Process

Every school leader can benefit from a personal coach. It is during this coaching relationship that the school leader can reflect on his or her own strengths, challenges, and experiences, and develop insights and experiment with new ideas and behaviors. This is especially important when deeper change requires more than just new technical skills (Patti et al., 2012). The coach does not share his experiences; rather, the coach serves as a guide, a reflective mirror for the school leader to search for his or her own solutions and use that information to set goals for personal and professional change.

Research in the field of coaching psychology is still in its nascent stages (Grant & Cavanaugh, 2007), but a handful of empirical studies have begun to show the impact coaching has at the business and personal level, including increases in hope, well-being, self-efficacy, self-esteem, and improved interpersonal relationships (Grant, 2003; Spence & Grant, 2007). Furthermore, coaching anchored in compassion rather than compliance has a greater probability of promoting desired, sustainable change in attitudes and behaviors (Smith, Van Osten & Boyatzis, 2008). To date, there is little empirical research on coaching in the field of educational leadership. What exists touches on some aspects of development of coaching skills in principals for instructional improvement (Neumerski, 2013). Instructional coaching has traditionally supported teachers by focusing on knowledge transfer, modeling, skills practice, feedback (Knight, 2007), and novice educational leaders who require support on the job.

Effective coaching needs to take account of peoples’ developmental stages, including some people who may not be ready for coaching. Often, those who seek out coaching support may already be operating from a more self-reflective level, as illustrated by the following principal’s comments: “Relationships with the people you work with matter. [The training] enhanced the way I thought about people” (Maldonado Torres, 2012, p. 68). Interestingly enough, this principal’s annual review process conducted 1 year after her coaching development, indicated, “This reflective school values professional development. . . . With insight and sensitivity, administration encourage and support teachers . . . to hone their skills as individuals and as a learning community” (p. 68). By contrast, less reflective and more self-protective school leaders may be less willing to open themselves up to such self-learning. For these individuals, other vehicles may be more productive, such as attending a series of social and emotional intelligence-based workshops or voluntarily participating in meetings.

Furthermore, strong peer networks among building leaders can make coaching more effective and lead to larger-scale systemwide impacts, as in the following case: A few years ago, a superintendent of a school district with 26,000 special education students in New York City invited her principals and their leadership teams to participate in a series of five leadership development coaching sessions to develop their social and emotional competencies. The coaching
was voluntary, with no penalties attached for nonparticipation. Over the next 5 years, 25 of the 61 school principals participated in EI-based individual and team coaching, leading to many changes in behaviors and practices that enhanced their performance. With their coach, the principals created common goals to improve the schools’ climate and students’ academic, social, and emotional success. Through facilitated dialogue led by the coach, the school leaders talked about behaviors that were inhibiting and enhancing their common vision and their professional performance. They tuned into their emotional states to understand the cause of their emotions and to choose more appropriate behaviors in a variety of situations.

Eventually all of the participating principals and teams who were coached signed on to participate in schoolwide SEL. The individual and team coaching served as a catalyst for the principals to become invested in social and emotional development for every member of the school community.

Guideline 6: Practice and Reassess

All learning occurs over time, through ongoing processes of practice, feedback, reflection, and correction. The more demanding the new skills we are trying to build, the more time, patience, and ongoing practice is essential. More to the point, the intra- and interpersonal goals we establish often lead to taking steps that are uncomfortable for us, actions often attached to emotionally laden experiences with long personal histories. Through ongoing practice, we reframe and break old patterns; we begin to envision new ways of saying and doing things. We set up possibilities for learning new strategies and even elicit help from friends, family members, and life partners.

This process is not any different from the types of exercises that are typical of SEL programs with young people. Adults have had a longer period of time to get locked into unproductive behaviors, so more practice and reassessment is sometimes needed. Personal change is a transformational process during which a person may move from one developmental stage to another. This can be difficult, as a psychological shift has to occur within the person to be able to embrace the change. One example of this happened to a school leader with whom we had worked. She had previously been a teacher in the school that she now leads. The staff members who knew her as a colleague now had to accept her as principal. The principal was overly concerned about alienating any of her former colleagues. Revisiting our developmental stages momentarily, it is obvious that this principal’s concern with maintaining her friendships and being liked (socialized stage of development) interfered with her ability to make needed decisions about teaching and learning. Whatever her vehicle for support, this principal had to recognize that as the leader of this school, the success of her students must come before her friendships with colleagues. These are the kinds of transformative changes to which we refer in our model that greatly impacts professional lives. They require school leaders to constantly use strategies to strengthen the five SEL competency domains both for themselves and all adults in the school.

Guideline 7: Build Resilient Peer Networks

In a truly collaborative peer community, the initiative and learning is led by the peers themselves. They come together to share instructional strategies that are effective, or to explore grade- or school-level academic data to determine where students need more help. Some may focus on resolving behavioral or climate issues, while others may actually conduct an inquiry lesson together to explore existing areas of academic concern. Effective peer learning communities are inclusive and empowered by the synergy of common passions, aspirations, and practical problems. There is a sense of belonging and trust that develops in these types of peer networks. This affiliation allows for individual risk taking and self-directed growth to occur.

School leaders benefit from participating in peer networks. Bengtson, Airola, Peer, and Davis (2012) conducted a study with 59 sitting principals who participated in the nationally recognized Arkansas Leadership Academy Master Principal Program. Using multiple methods, they explored the relationship between ongoing reflection within peer networks, increased reflective capacity of practitioners, and improvement in school
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Performance. Narrative writings analyzed over 2 years of participation indicated higher scores in the principal's reflective practice. There was a correlation between these principal candidate's experience and improved performance of their schools.

Recently, such a network of principals was formed through their connection with New York City’s Morningside Center, which brought together principals who were interested in deepening their understanding of SEL. Individual coaching was offered to them as part of this initiative. The majority of principals agreed to participate in the personal, professional coaching. When asked why they agreed to give their time to this intensive coaching process, one principal, responding for the group said, “It was a group decision. We are a network of about nine schools that have taken this on and are learning from one another [We see this as] a great opportunity to work on our emotional development as leaders” (J. Patti, personal communication, January 10, 2013). The positive group synergy clearly motivated these principals to continue their work together.

Another example of resilient peer networks can be seen in the promising program Dia (developing intelligence through art), a methodology created in Mexico, which has been used to train over 25,000 teachers and school leaders in more than 4,000 schools and 28 states throughout this country. The overarching aim is gradually to transform the traditional hierarchical, unilateral, instructional forms of teaching into a dialogic environment in which the teacher guides the process of thinking and learning collaboratively with the students. Dia’s pedagogical framework transforms the learning space using visual art as a vehicle for developing the physical, mental, emotional, and social capacities of the individual and the community. Both adults and young people build a safe space to think, feel, share, and support one another as they individually and collectively make sense of a work of art. With equal focus on student and adult development, the aim is to increase the quality of education and develop 21st-century skills for teachers and students. Using this transformative pedagogy, Dia has created an extended learning community in which it is safe to take risks to learn new curriculum and pedagogical strategies. Today, Dia is regarded as an exemplar of best educational practices in Mexico. They have expanded their work to include a strong SEL component called SER that focuses on the four cluster competencies of emotional intelligence. Dia and Ser are becoming models for other countries of the power of extended peer learning networks in transforming pedagogy. We have much to learn from these efforts regarding institutionalization of best practices in adult transformation.

Although these guidelines represent our collective experiences, and an emerging literature base, we would be remiss if we did not express the drawbacks that may be encountered in trying to pursue this path of leadership development. Furthermore, by no means are we recommending that the personal, professional development we describe in this chapter excludes other training opportunities that school leaders need in the “nuts and bolts” of everyday school leadership. Combined together, school leaders will be empowered to achieve success. Finally, the more knowledgeable we are of the possibilities and of the roadblocks we may encounter, the more success we will have in choosing impactful professional development.

Problems and Pitfalls

There are several reasons that school leaders might shy away from the professional development pedagogy described in this chapter. First and foremost, the reality of the pressures placed on educational leaders, particularly on school principals, to raise student achievement can cloud everything, and limit the willingness of principals to pursue this more reflective form of leadership development. Second, depending on the leadership style and developmental stages of school leaders, this type of development may be regarded as unnecessary, superficial, or even threatening to some. Third, school leaders who are not familiar with the research base in K–12 SEL may be less willing to explore this adult level of development. Strong, research-based SEL programs often include a certain amount of SEL skills development for school staff that can help to begin the adult development focus.

As with all effective professional development, this work requires more than an ini-
tional workshop or training. Regularly scheduled trainings and/or coaching and resilient peer networks will be needed to help with the transformational process. Although this kind of development is no more costly than many other learning opportunities, any intention to bring this work to the broader school community will require a time, space, and collaborative commitment by all school members. Finally, with little empirical research yet available in the educational field on what methods of leadership development are most effective, many may not see the value in making a long-term commitment to this process. More research must be conducted, so that successful practices can be identified and implemented more broadly. Finally, training providers must have an extensive knowledge of the field of SEL and adult professional development, as the two need to be intricately connected in creating a climate for learning in a culture that values the social, emotional, and cognitive development of children and the adults who teach them.

Conclusion

It is important to remember that we live in a time of profound change. Yet it is often easier to name the economic, social, and ecological crises we face than to deal with the emotions that block us from addressing them—the confusion, fear, anger, denial, and, ultimately, disengagement. We believe that many of the roots of these challenges lie in an education system that neither helps students understand the systemic causes of these problems nor develops the emotional maturity to face them productively. Shifting this paradigm starts with reframing professional development to focus on growing school leaders and resilient peer learning networks that can shape environments that nurture the cognitive, emotional, and social maturity students will need to be successful in their careers and as citizens.

References


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