

PREFACE

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Working for the good of children is surely a vocation, a calling—not just a job. Like any calling, the work of education has both unique rewards and trying sacrifices. The nature of education—leading young people, readying them for life—calls on the hearts, the minds, and the souls of those who work within the schoolhouse doors. Thus the title of this multi-volume series: *The Soul of Educational Leadership*.

The initial volume, *Engaging EVERY Learner*, was selected to send a signal of all-inclusiveness. Every student matters deeply, to all of us in schools and in our society. Subsequent volumes feature contributions by leading thinkers and practitioners in the field on the soul-work of educational leadership. The overarching theme in Volume 1 was sounded by Alan Blankstein—editor of this series, together with myself and Paul Houston: “Saving young people from failure in school is equivalent to saving their lives!” Those powerful words set the tone for all that we hope to do in this series: “It is not easy or simple work, yet it can be done.” And more, too: We know how to do what must be done.

In this second volume, *Out-of-the-Box Leadership*, Paul Houston sets the tone by observing that schools have been making incremental progress in an exponential environment: “We have gradually been improving education while the deteriorating social conditions surrounding families and children have confronted us with all sorts of new challenges.” The executive director of the American Association of School Administrators (AASA), Houston calls for transformative leadership, which can come only by thinking differently about our problems. Unfortunately, he notes, there aren’t

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places to learn how to escape the boxes we've created. Helping educators and educational leaders escape their boxes is the primary purpose of this volume.

"Outside-the-box leaders create clarity out of confusion, optimism and efficacy out of resignation, and interdependence out of dependence," writes another executive director, Dennis Sparks, head of the National Staff Development Council, in his chapter, "What It Means to Be an Outside-the-Box Leader." High-quality leadership development is one of a school system's most important responsibilities, Sparks maintains, and he details the characteristics of such developmental work.

"To lead outside of the box, one must learn to think outside of the box!" claims Les Omotani, superintendent of the Hewlett-Woodmere Public Schools in Nassau County, Long Island, New York. "When we simply react to issues, we tend to see everything as a management problem to be solved," Omotani writes in "Caring, Serving . . . Leading." "When we focus on a shared vision, and the desired culture for our schools and community, we open the door for leadership."

In "An Epistemological Problem: What if We Have the Wrong Theory?" Thomas Sergiovanni, Lillian Radford Distinguished Professor at Trinity University in Houston, Texas, strikes a sobering note: "Improving schools is not as easy as it sounds. Hanging onto improvements once they are in place is even more difficult." What if we are using the wrong theories of leadership and of school improvement? "Developing new and more effective leadership designs and school improvement strategies requires making deeply rooted changes that result in breaking away from existing values and ideas."

"Reflections on Leadership: When Minds and Hearts Are Open," is framed as a coffee-shop discussion between Kari Coccozzella, an elementary principal in the Adams 12 Five-Star District, and Thomas J. Kasper, principal of Dakota Valley Elementary School in Cherry Creek Schools—both in metropolitan Denver. "Leaders must also be learners," they agree. "Having the courage to trust others enables a leader to recognize and access the best in everyone, including oneself. It's about *being* a leader rather than *doing* leadership; leadership is rooted in our humanity, not in a checklist of things to do."

Jane Kendrick has been principal of an urban middle school, superintendent of a PreK–12 urban school district, and consultant for strategic professional development to a large-city school district. In "Out-of-the-Box Leadership: A Reflection on Leading Educational

Transformation,” she puts those pieces together, while noting sagely, “Promoting and engaging in out-of-the-box leadership should in no way negate the importance and purpose of continuing to engage in some in-the-box leadership.”

Hank Rubin, formerly Joint Dean of Education at the University of South Dakota and South Dakota State University, recently assumed the position of Dean of Education and Robert & Mildred Peronia Naslund Chair in the School of Education at the University of Redlands, California. The lesson he’s learned about leadership is this: “that it’s fundamental to effective leadership to understand that not one of us leads programs, units, school sites, institutions, or district bureaucracies. Each one of us leads people—and we lead them in and through relationships.” With this in mind, Rubin proposes a unifying theory or model that might guide practice, teaching, and professional development.

In the concluding chapter, Jerome Murphy, in “Embracing the Enemy: Moving Beyond the Pain of Leadership,” dares to address the dark side of being a leader: pain. Murphy, Harold Howe II Professor of Education and former dean of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, writes, “Unlike the other authors in this volume, my goal is not to think ‘outside the box’ of leadership, but rather to shine a light inside the box—in this case, the Pandora’s box that holds the inner struggles and personal demons of senior managers.”

In this second volume of an eight-volume endeavor, we have enlisted some of the very best thinkers and doers we know to examine all sides of the enormously complex box that is American education—and even to peer into the dark heart that is our own fear of leading the charge, and failing. As Jerry Murphy wrote, “Ultimately, it’s about moving forward on our journey—in work, in life, and in leadership.” Once again, it is our aim to help strengthen you for this task.