

# INTRODUCTION



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In 2006 we began this multivolume series, *The Soul of Educational Leadership*, with two vitally important themes: inclusiveness (in *Engaging Every Learner*) and transformation (in *Out-of-the-Box Leadership*). In Volume 3, *Sustaining Professional Learning Communities*, we moved on to the perilously difficult task of holding onto, and improving upon, valuable work once it has begun. Now, 2 years later, after tackling *Spirituality in Educational Leadership* (Volume 4) and *The Leader as Communicator and Diplomat* (Volume 6), we address *Building Sustainable Leadership Capacity*, a topic that feels like the first cousin of Volume 3.

In education, it's always been a challenge to retain the good things we've accomplished. So often, years of good work can be blown into oblivion by a new superintendent, or a turnover on the school board, or budget woes, or the latest craze in professional development. Always at the heart of this perennial struggle are the young people who matter so deeply to those of us who work in and around schools, and to our society. That theme was sounded in Volume 1 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!” That truth set the tone for this entire series. We know how to do what needs doing, and the aim

of these volumes is to enlist the thinking of those who set the tone for the discussion—in this case, holding onto the excellence that we have caused to happen.

This volume provides a range of complementary viewpoints from around the world. The authors herein see clearly that the development of leadership capacity that will endure requires a clarity of shared moral vision and urgency, leadership in community, and a recognition of the challenges posed by young people's lives outside of school. Moreover, as Dennis Sparks puts it, "Leadership development supports leaders in developing a sense of appreciation and hopefulness and in leading from their strengths and 'best selves.'" That moral framework is consonant with the vision that has guided this series from its inception.

Sparks, emeritus executive director of the National Staff Development Council whose most recent book is *Leading for Results: Transforming Teaching, Learning, and Relationships in Schools*, leads off this volume with a call to arms in "What I Believe About Leadership Development." "Without teamwork and sustained professional learning," he writes, "systemwide continuous improvements are fated to remain a fervent wish rather than become a reality." Sparks provides an ideal frame for this volume when he emphasizes that "significant improvements in teaching and learning for all students begins with significant change in leaders."

Leadership as it is traditionally conceived has little appeal to the world's emerging leaders, maintains Linda Lambert in "Reconceptualizing the Road Toward Leadership Capacity." Professor Emeritus at California State University, East Bay, and founder of Lambert Leadership Development (and now a novelist), Lambert asks what kind of leadership survives when the formal leader leaves. Her answer is this: leadership reconceived as reciprocal, purposeful learning in community and realized as the network of learning relationships in an organization.

In "The Moral Imperative Revisited: Achieving Large-Scale Reform," Michael Fullan urges educators to integrate an urgent moral purpose with appropriate strategies to achieve that purpose, and thus benefit entire systems, as well as individual students and schools. Fullan, Professor Emeritus of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto and an internationally recognized authority on education reform, emphasizes that a moral imperative must be combined with powerful strategies to

make it a reality *in practice*. When this happens, moral purpose takes on a life of its own, thus giving it additional power in the hearts and minds of all educators and even the public.

The organizational structures of most schools around the world are fundamentally unchanged since the beginning of the 20th century, maintains Dean Fink in “Leadership for Mortals: Developing and Sustaining Leaders of Learning.” Fink, an international educational development consultant and a former superintendent and principal with the Halton Board of Education in Ontario, Canada, notes that policy efforts focusing on results have placed unique pressures on leaders, and undermined educational leadership. The challenge for today’s leaders is to cope with outmoded structures while simultaneously leading schools on the path toward becoming learning communities.

Louise Stoll and David Jackson emphasize that leadership has to be a shared enterprise, within and between its various levels. “It has to be a system that connects, not divides,” they write in “Liberating Leadership Potential: Designing for Leadership Growth.” To make this happen requires the development of leadership capacity. Stoll is Visiting Professor at the London Centre for Leadership in Learning at the Institute of Education, University of London, and also at the Department of Education, University of Bath. Jackson, senior associate of the Innovation Unit, has in recent years led large-scale programs supporting the implementation of what has come to be called “system leadership.”

“The bond between social class and educational achievement is a particularly powerful one, and particularly resistant to change,” writes Alma Harris in “Against the Odds: Successful Leadership in Challenging Schools.” Harris, Chair of Educational Leadership at the Institute of Education, University of London, continues, “Breaking this bond will require leadership that is responsive to school context and is underpinned by an unrelenting focus on improving conditions at the building and classroom levels.” Leaders in such settings will need “a strong sense of moral purpose and a firm belief that schools and young people can achieve against all odds.”

“Leadership must be shared; it can no longer reside solely in the hands of a superintendent or a building principal,” writes Robert W. Katulak, superintendent of schools in the New Hyde Park-Garden City Park School District in Nassau County, Long Island. In “Developing Leaders of Learners,” Katulak details the ways in which

he ensured that leadership was entrusted to teachers—“leaders of learners who are created from within.” The mark of success for any leader is if their work is sustained after they leave an organization, he concludes; a true leader knows that if he or she modeled shared leadership correctly, other leaders will know how to imitate this model.

In “Building Leadership Capacity for School-Based Social-Emotional Learning (SEL): The Trajectory of Young Leaders,” Maurice J. Elias, professor in the psychology department at Rutgers University and founding member of the leadership team for the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), allowed four up-and-coming educational leaders to tell their own stories. The result is an intersection of two goals: “understanding important influences in the emergence of leadership at a relatively early point in the leadership trajectory, and providing an opportunity for young leaders to share their particular stories.”

Nancy Shin Pascal, executive director of the HOPE Foundation, writes the capstone piece for this volume: “Developing and Sustaining Leadership Capacity.” Taking into account the great demand for leaders caused by retirements and mobility, she provides a detailed examination of the structures and processes used by the district leadership to recruit future leaders and build leadership capacity at all levels in Mattoon, a small district in east-central Illinois. The intent of Mattoon’s leaders was this: to build the leadership capacity necessary to ensure the success of *all* their students and to address the looming retirement of a daunting percentage of the entire staff. As Shin Pascal concludes, “Developing teacher leadership is a very practical response to the harsh realities of instability of leadership at the top, escalating student needs, and decreasing resources.”

Back in Volume 3, whose themes echoed this volume, Nancy Shin Pascal and Alan Blankstein, reporting on their work in Newport News, Virginia, wrote of the need for “constancy of purpose” in bringing about change that endures. They concluded, “The journey is not over, and never will be.” So it is for leaders in education, whose work of preparing young people for life includes both unique rewards and trying sacrifices. The work never ends, but the rewards both for self and for society are immeasurably grand. As always, it is our aim to help strengthen you for this task.