SECTION 1

Leadership as a Moral Craft

What makes a good leader? That's a tough question. Context plays a key role in deciding whether certain approaches to leadership will be effective or not. Thus what a leader says and does to be effective in one kind of enterprise may not lead to effectiveness in another kind of enterprise. Susan Moore Johnson puts it this way: "Leadership looks different—and is different—depending on whether it is experienced in a legislature, on a battlefield, at a rally, on a factory floor, or in a school district" (1996, 14).

Schools need special leadership because schools are special places. Sure schools share with other enterprises common managerial requirements that insure basic levels of organizational purpose, competence, reliability, structure and stability. But schools must respond as well to the unique political realities they face. After all, schools belong to parents and children, interact with the needs of local businesses, churches and other community groups, and have a unique relationship with state governments. These "stakeholders" don't always agree and it takes a high level of political skill for school leaders to bring about the necessary consensus and commitment to make schools work well for everyone.

Schools also need special leadership because they are staffed by professionals who don't react warmly to the kind of hierarchically based command leadership or hero leadership that characterizes so many other kinds of organizations. Nor do these professionals have a high tolerance

for bureaucratic rituals. Though school leaders may be in charge, the best of them are aware that often the teachers they supervise know more about what needs to be done and particularly how to do it than they do. This reality creates large ability-authority gaps in schools that must be breached.

Schools are places where children and young people struggle to achieve the necessary developmental growth and to accumulate the necessary intellectual knowledge, practical skills, habits of mind and character traits that will enable them to "run the country" in just a few short years after they graduate from high school. The presence of children and young adults in a learning and developing environment and the awesome responsibility that schools have to serve these students well are still other characteristics that make schools unique and that require us to view school leadership differently. Ordinary images of how to organize, provide leadership and support, motivate, and ensure accountability just don't seem to fit schools very well.

The unique context for schooling, particularly in a democratic society, raises the question of sources of authority for leadership practice. As important as a school leader's personality and interpersonal skills may be to success, and as handy as bureaucratic reasons may be to use, neither are sufficiently powerful to provide that leader with the sources of authority needed to reach students, parents, teachers and others in powerful ways. Needed are substitutes for bureaucratic and personal leadership that compel people to respond to internal reasons. Substitutes for leadership are exactly what a moral emphasis in leadership can provide.

The articles included in Section 1 describe a new kind of leadership that I believe must become the framework for the way we do things in schools. This leadership is moral because it emphasizes the bringing together of diverse people into a common cause by struggling to make the school a covenantal community. Covenantal communities have at their center shared ideas, principles, and purposes that provide a powerful source of authority for leadership practice. In covenantal communities the purpose of leadership is to create a shared followership. Leaders in covenantal communities function as head followers.

The language of head followership focuses attention on what is being followed. There can be no leadership if there is nothing important to follow. Leadership, in this sense, is more cognitive than interpersonal and the source of authority for leadership practice is based on goals, purposes, values, commitments and other ideas that provide the basis for followership. This idea-based leadership is much more likely to motivate people to action than is interpersonally based leadership. The evidence for this assertion can be found in your own personal experiences.

Imagine a leader who you personally admire because of her or his ability to handle people well. But you do not agree with this person's goals. Compare this leader with another who you may not even like very much but whose ideas make a great deal of sense to you.

Which of the two leaders would you be more willing to follow? This scenario illustrates the four pillars of leadership: leaders, followers, ideas, and action. All four are needed for leadership to be effective. Leadership that does not result in action, for example, is like a work only half completed no matter how eloquent its ideas or passionate its followers. Action is much more likely to result when leaders and followers are connected to each other by a commitment to common ideas.

In the first article "Leadership and Excellence in Schooling," I describe five forces that leaders can use to bring about or to preserve changes needed to improve schooling. The forces are technical, human, educational, symbolic and cultural. Though all five are important and can contribute to the development of a moral basis for leadership, it is the symbolic and cultural that wind up being the most powerful.

"Administration as a Moral Craft," the second article, is an edited chapter from *The Principalship: A Reflective Practice Perspective.* This reading shows how successful principals bring together the heart, head and hand of leadership in their practice. The moral nature of administrative work in schools is then discussed and the idea of leaders cultivating a culture of followership is developed. This article shows how successful schools are also schools of character, examines how our democratic traditions relate to moral leadership and concludes with a discussion of purposing as a key function of school leadership.

Viewing leadership as a moral craft reminds us of the powerful roles that the inner characteristics of leadership play in bringing about successful schooling. Though school leaders must be many things to many people and school leaders must pay attention to educational, management and political roles, at the heart of their work they are ministers. *Minister,* after all, is the root word in administer. Whatever else principals do they must first minister to the purposes of the school, minister to the idea structure that provides a source of authority for what people do, and minister to the needs of those who day by day do the work of the school. The remaining articles in Section 1 expand on these themes by providing examples of how moral leadership works and what principals and other school leaders can do to make it work effectively in their own schools.

Moral leadership is the means that principals and others can use to build connections. As students, teachers, parents, and administrators are more firmly connected to themselves, each other, their work and their responsibilities higher levels of academic and civic engagement will be

observed. This engagement provides the framework for improving student performance as well as levels of civility, increasing the quality of parental participation, and enhancing teacher professionalism.

REFERENCE

Johnson, Susan Moore. (1996). *Leading to change.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.