

FOREWORD

Saint Paul, “the best man the world possessed, his hair whitened with the labours for the good of men and the glory of God,” etched his mark on history through his Epistles. Paul Houston is not a canonized saint, but as a spokesman for the soul and spirit of education he comes close. Several years ago, we published a quote from Paul in our book, *The Wizard and The Warrior*: “At night I relish the opportunity to indulge myself by exploring the unlimited potential of the human spirit. In the morning I don my suit of armor and head off to battle the dark forces at work. I am struggling to integrate the two roles.” He speaks for most school administrators in the country who know, deep down, what’s right for students but are struggling against a strong riptide pulling schools away from their noble purpose or calling. As an exemplar of heart and courage Paul, each day, exhibits the essence of leadership. In this book he shares his well-seasoned wisdom with the profession he represents.

As a student of leadership, I seldom read the educational administration literature. Most of the writing paints the work of superintendents, principals, and teachers a shade of pale gray when I see it as hot pink. When asked to write this foreword, I received a sample of Paul’s “epistles” and then requested the entire volume. I read each one with great joy, effortlessly drawn into a mystical, magical world of teaching, learning, and leading.

A sample of the down-to-earth titles of Paul’s stories gives advance notice of what lies ahead: “On Becoming a Hope Pusher,” “Barking Up the Right Tree,” “The Seven Deadly Sins of No Child Left Behind,” “The Road to Hana.” The pages are peppered with allegorical language: spirituality, hope, soul, grace, blessing, joy, fun, and fantasy. His writing is inviting and lyrical and his premises compelling. His upbeat message is a welcome antidote to prevailing mechanistic images of schools as factories and students as test

x No Challenge Left Behind

scores. Rather than emphasizing rigorous classrooms to see if students measure up, we ought to be championing vigorous places to beckon them in.

My shelves are overflowing with books about leadership and education. This one I'll keep close by. Anytime I begin to doubt the difference schools and leaders can make, I'll pick it up, turn to a story, and remind myself of why I became an educator.

Terrence E. Deal
Professor (ret.)