Chapter 7

Providing Leadership at the District Level

Key Facets of the Chapter

- Importance of leadership in contemporary practice
- Understanding leadership
- Leadership functions
- Leadership dispositions
- Normative perspectives on leadership

CASE STUDY WAITING TO MAKE CHANGES

Dr. Raymond Bernelli was to attend a second interview with the Oak Meadow School District (OMSD) board. If selected for the position, he would be changing employers for the fourth time in 19 years. As a superintendent, he had implemented new programs with the enthusiastic support of administrators, teachers, and the community in his current and two previous positions. Deservedly, he had acquired a reputation as a visionary leader and change agent.

The OMSD serves a suburban community near a major city; the population in the metropolitan

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area is approximately 1.3 million, and the population in Oak Meadow is approximately 38,000. Approximately 6,700 students attend one of OMSD's six schools. The Oak Meadow's average family income is the highest in the state, and the school district ranks first in per-pupil expenditures and second in average teacher salaries among the state's 229 districts. Approximately 85% of the high school's graduates attend college, and only 8% of the students are classified as racial or ethnic minorities (5% African American and 3% Hispanic or Latino).

When Dr. Jacob Eddelman announced his retirement after having served the OMSD for 13 years, the school board was inundated with inquiries about the superintendent vacancy. The board retained Dr. Rita Morales, a nationally known search consultant, to assist in filling the vacancy. The board received 128 applications; Dr. Morales conducted the paper screening and presented the board with a list of six semifinalists. Each was interviewed, and the board then narrowed the search to two finalists, both of whom had a second interview with the board.

The seven-member school board was representative of the community. By occupation, the board consisted of three business executives, a physician, an attorney, a retired principal, and a retired electrical engineer. The board president, Ronald Barrin, was a partner in a brokerage firm and had served on the board for 13 years.

During his first interview with the school board, Dr. Bernelli was asked questions about his career and education philosophy. He told the board members about specific programs that he had implemented in each of the three districts where he had served as superintendent. The board members were impressed. Moreover, Dr. Bernelli had very good communication skills and a warm personality. He entered the second interview with a slight edge over the other finalist.

The second interview took place in the OMSD boardroom located adjacent to the superintendent's office. All board members were present; however, Dr. Morales, the board's consultant, was not. After about 15 minutes of informal discussion, the board president asked a challenging question:

"Dr. Bernelli, we are impressed by your accomplishments. While we are not looking for a superintendent who will transform the district, we feel that some new ideas are always healthy because they help prevent stagnation. You have vision and obviously you're not afraid to pursue change when change is advantageous. You have had several weeks to reflect since your first interview. Given your thoughts about our community and school district, what changes do you think would be advantageous?"

Dr. Bernelli responded politely, "I don't know."

His answer appeared to have surprised the board members. After an awkward moment of silence, Mr. Barrin spoke again.

"Maybe I didn't ask the question very clearly. Let me try again."

But before he could do so, Dr. Bernelli interrupted, "I think I understood your question. Allow me to explain my answer. To respond intelligently, I need to know much more about your community and school district. Any answer I would give now would be speculative, and I don't feel comfortable with giving you that type of answer."

One of the other board members then asked, "Aren't there certain school reform initiatives that all districts should be pursuing? Aren't there governance and education improvements that

would be beneficial regardless of community and district contexts?"

"Perhaps," Dr. Bernelli responded, "but effective and substantive change should be based on real needs and interests, not on trends. This is a very reputable school district—arguably, the best in the state. No doubt you employ many outstanding educators who have valuable insights about possible improvements and organizational growth. In addition, change should be considered in the context of the collective power of district stakeholders. Until I become sufficiently acquainted with the community and district employees, and until I understand this district's prevailing culture, any suggestions for change would be uninformed opinions."

The same board member reacted, "How long will it take you to reach a point at which you will be comfortable answering the question about needed change?"

"That depends on the degree to which open communication can be pursued," Dr. Bernelli answered, "but given the size of the organization, I would estimate a minimum of 2 years."

Mr. Barrin then interjected, "Dr. Eddelman, our retiring superintendent, has a reputation for getting things done without being a dictator. He has not backed away from difficult decisions. He has some critics, but what superintendent doesn't? Although he often asked others for input, he did so after making it clear that important decisions were his responsibility. As our next superintendent, how would you be different?"

Dr. Bernelli responded, "I have met Dr. Eddelman and I know he is respected by fellow superintendents. No one questions his success in this district. Keep in mind that a leadership style that worked in the past may not work in the future—primarily because conditions surrounding a decision never are static. I prefer to make decisions, even very important decisions, democratically. That said, I realize that a superintendent must be prepared to act when democratic decisions are not feasible or when efforts to reach a democratic decision are unsuccessful. I am confident that my current and previous board members will verify that I get things done and that includes making difficult and controversial decisions when necessary. Perhaps the prudent thing would be for me to list some changes today. But doing that without knowing the community and district sufficiently simply is not prudent. If I am honored to be your next superintendent, I assure you that I will work diligently to identify problems and to address them."

INTRODUCTION

As demonstrated in the case study, people define, and conceive of, leadership in dissimilar ways. At least several of the school board members view leadership as being directive and change oriented. The interviewee views leadership as facilitative and democratic. Role conflict, that is, inconsistent conceptualizations, is rather common in all organizations. The disparate views expressed in the case study are not unexpected, because according to Yukl (2006), the term **leadership** has been added to the technical vocabulary of disciplines and professions without being defined precisely and uniformly.

During the past 2 decades of the 20th century, widespread concern for the condition of public schooling launched what is arguably the most concentrated, comprehensive, and continual effort to reform public education in America's history. National commission and task force reports examined the purpose and condition of schooling, demanded accountability and higher expectations for student performance, and challenged conventional assumptions about how schools are structured, managed, and governed (Björk, 2001). Closely entwined themes of leadership and learning, as well as increasing demands for participation in decision- and policy-making venues, heightened the expectations that superintendents provide leadership needed to reinvent schools (Odden, 1995). As a result, superintendents not only needed to know about districts and schools, but they also needed to know when change was necessary, why it was necessary, and how it should be pursued (Björk, Lindle, & Van Meter, 1999). This chapter explores (a) leadership as an administrative role expectation, (b) leadership functions, (c) **instructional leadership**, and (d) normative leadership perspectives.

UNDERSTANDING LEADERSHIP

Leadership has been defined in different ways, and consequently, perceptions of this role have not been uniform; using leadership as a synonym for **administration** and **management** adds to confusion. Three topics are especially relevant to understanding leadership appropriately: (1) distinctions between leadership and management, (2) distinctions between leadership style and strategy, and (3) the determinants of leadership behavior.

Leadership Versus Management

Aristotle distinguished between knowledge necessary to make things and knowledge necessary to make right choices. The former is largely rational and technical; the latter is more practical and embedded in values and beliefs. Historically, the school administration profession has given much more attention to technical knowledge, largely because the realities of practice required superintendents to concentrate on managerial tasks. Many practitioners considered management and leadership synonymous until the late 1970s, when scholars (e.g., Bass, 1985; Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Burns, 1978; Rost, 1991) began distinguishing between these roles. This result was a paradigm shift away from industrial management to postindustrial leadership perspectives. Nanus (1989), for

example, wrote that “managers are people who do things right and leaders do the right things” (p. 21). Burns’s (1978) seminal work, which focused on transactional versus transformational behavior, also contributed to a more precise understanding of administration (Gronn, 2000). According to Burns, transactional administrators believe that people are motivated primarily by self-interests. Thus, they do what they are asked to do largely because of rewards and punishment. Jaques (1989) characterized transactional administration as management. Transformational administration by comparison focuses on working with, and through, others in accomplishing shared goals (Bass, 1985). This type of behavior is commonly associated with leadership (Kowalski, 2003).

Rost (1991) also viewed management and leadership as separate roles. He described management as an “authority relationship between at least one manager and one subordinate who coordinate their activities to produce and sell particular goods and/or services” (p. 145). The relationship between the supervisor and employee is asymmetrical; that is, the supervisor has the authority to manage the exchange of labor for wages and retains the power to use coercive means to sanction unacceptable worker behavior. In other words, the relationship “is primarily top-down as to the directives given and bottom-up as to the responses given” (p. 147). Management exists in hierarchical and democratic organizations as the raison d’être of organizations (i.e., the need to maintain organizational efficiency, coordinate activities, and accomplish goals). By contrast, Rost defined leadership as “an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes” (p. 162). This transformational view is predicated on a symmetrical relationship between supervisor and employee; that is, both parties communicate freely and benefit from their interactions (Kowalski, 2010).

Bennis and Nanus’s (1985) notion that transformational behavior “is morally purposeful and elevating” (p. 218) underscores the importance of incorporating moral and ethical standards in a superintendent’s practice. Moral leadership seeks to influence others by appealing to “higher ideals and moral values such as liberty, justice, equality, peace, and humanitarianism” (Yukl, 1989, p. 210) in pursuit of commonly held, higher level goals. These ideals and values empower others to improve their work, to increase their professional competency through reflection, and to promote a sense of community, ownership, and commitment (Bennis, 1984; Burns, 1978). **Transformational leadership** may occur at both a personal level, such as exchanges between two individuals, and an organizational level, such as cultural change (Yukl, 2006). At the school district level, a transformational superintendent can build a professional community within a school or district by valuing “the ideal of group solidarity and a commitment to norms of care and responsibility” (Power, 1993, p. 159).

In summary, management is a function that focuses primarily on how to do things. Leadership is a function that focuses primarily on making decisions about what to do. Administration is a broad term that encompasses both roles (Kowalski, 2010). In modern practice, both management and leadership are considered essential for superintendents. Even so, leadership has assumed much more prominence in the context of societal changes and sustained demands for school reform.

Superintendent Strategy and Style

Superintendent leadership strategies and styles are influenced by a wide array of factors, including role expectations, personal needs, and work contexts. For example, as discussed in Chapter 1, superintendents are expected to assume five separate role characterizations. Although the importance of each has varied depending on social trends and conditions in school districts (Sergiovanni, Burlingame, Coombs, & Thurston, 1992), all have remained relevant to practice (Brunner, Grogan, & Björk, 2002; Callahan, 1966; Kowalski, 2005).

Leadership strategy refers to long-term, comprehensive patterns of leadership behavior (Bassett, 1970) formed through organizational socialization—formal and informal processes by which the culture of the organization and ways of doing administration are transmitted to new members (Etzioni, 1969; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). The nexus between strategy and socialization has become especially cogent in the context of school reform because it helps us understand why superintendents and principals often resist being change agents. Historically, public schools were agencies of stability (Spring, 1990) with the result that most administrators were socialized to avoid failure; that is, they were rewarded for dodging conflict and preventing problems from reaching higher levels of the organization. Even when this strategy was incongruent with personal convictions, many practitioners accepted "their role entirely in symbolic terms. In doing so they become dependent upon the organization for their very character, with the result that they put themselves at its mercy" (Bassett, 1970, p. 223). Clearly, leadership strategy is a deeply embedded and culturally transmitted pattern of behavior that persists over time and is difficult to change.

Leadership style, on the other hand, refers to a superintendent's motivational system that determines how the superintendent interacts with subordinates (Bass & Stogdill, 1990; Bassett, 1970; Hoy & Miskel, 2008). Variation in style is usually described along continua, such as from autocratic to democratic, and from task orientation to people orientation. In essence, style is an intricate mix

of personal philosophy, professional knowledge, experience, and situational variables. For the modern superintendent, the effectiveness of style choices often depends on selecting behaviors that best fit circumstances (Leithwood, 1995). Table 7.1 provides examples of leadership strategies and styles.

Whereas leadership strategy may be culturally embedded and organizationally imposed, leadership style remains largely a matter of personal conviction. As expected, congruity between organizational strategy and individual style often benefits an administrator because conflict between the two variables is reduced. Nevertheless, inappropriate strategies often deter necessary organizational development.

Determinants of Leadership Behavior

Behavior in organizations, including a superintendent's behavior, is shaped by two variables, one sociological and the other psychological.

Table 7.1 Examples of Leadership Strategies and Styles

Category	*Focus*	*Range*	*Explanation*
Strategy	Authority	Centralization to decentralization	In centralized districts, superintendents (and district administrators) exercise considerable authority over schools; in decentralized districts, superintendents relegate considerable authority to principals.
Strategy	Associations	Competition to collaboration	In a competitive environment, administrators are encouraged to compete with each other; in a collaborative environment, administrators are encouraged to work collectively.
Style	Motivation	**Transactional** to transformational	Transactional superintendents use rewards/punishment to influence behavior; transformational superintendents appeal to professionalism and collegiality to influence behavior.
Style	Philosophy	Autocratic to democratic	Autocratic superintendents make most decisions alone with little or no input from others; democratic superintendents seek input from others and prefer group decision making.

Getzels and Guba (1957) referred to the former as the *nomothetic* and the latter as the *idiographic*. In brief, behavior is considered to be a product of a prescribed organizational role (e.g., expectations detailed in a job description) intersecting with an employee's personality (e.g., a person's needs, interests, proclivities). Proportions of personality and role are not constant, because organizations have dissimilar levels of role specificity and demands for conformity, and individuals have dissimilar personalities. In school districts, principals who have identical job descriptions frequently behave differently. The variance is explained by the idiographic dimension; that is, behavioral differences in the context of identical roles are attributable to personality differences.

McGregor's (1960) Theory X and Theory Y are among the most widely recognized and used human relations models applied to explain administrative behavior. According to these paradigms, a superintendent's perspective of people determines how he or she treats subordinates. Theory X is framed by three pessimistic assumptions: (1) people generally dislike work and try to avoid it; (2) because of a negative disposition toward work, employees must be pushed and controlled if they are to attain organizational goals; and (3) because they lack personal responsibility, employees seek managerial control (McGregor, 1990a). Theory X is commonly associated with traditional management behavior. Theory Y is framed by three very different assumptions: (1) conditions in the workplace affect employee commitment, responsibility, and productivity; (2) in positive environments, employees often become committed to organizational goals and work diligently toward their attainment; and (3) employees possess the ability to solve problems they encounter, but this potential is either not recognized or not used in many organizations (McGregor, 1990b). McGregor stressed the importance of leaders questioning their subconscious assumptions about employees and the effects of those assumptions on relationships and organizational productivity. In essence, McGregor's theories help us understand why convictions about human nature shape superintendent behavior.

Administrative behavior also is affected by predispositions toward tasks and people. Seminal work in this area was compiled at Ohio State University by Hemphill and Coons (1950). They identified two behavioral dispositions: *initiating structure* and *consideration*. The former is associated with employee productivity and organizational effectiveness, and it can have considerable influence on group performance when tasks in a school district are poorly defined. Consideration, however, involves building trust, respect, and friendship and

showing concern for the well-being of employees. Halpin (1967) found that highly effective superintendents scored high on both *initiating structure* and *consideration* dimensions, whereas ineffective superintendents scored low on both. Although individuals may be naturally inclined to emphasize tasks over people, the most effective administrators develop the skill to emphasize both (Hoy & Miskel, 2008).

During the 1980s, **situational leadership** and contingency leadership became increasingly attractive as concepts because the complexity of school reform drew attention to leader effectiveness. Four separate, yet related, variables were involved: context, leader traits, behavior, and effectiveness. Behavior is determined by a mix of personal traits and skills; effectiveness is determined by the extent to which traits and skills are adapted appropriately to a given situation (Hoy & Miskel, 2008). In summary, the belief that contextual variability requires different leadership styles supplanted the belief that there is one best administrative style. An inability or unwillingness to adjust partially explains why some superintendents have been highly successful in some settings but not in others.

INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

During the late 1980s, development of large-scale, systemic reform shifted the focus to districts, and the instructional leadership role of superintendents was acknowledged as being pivotal to this transition. Some educators, however, regard the role of superintendents as instructional leaders as an unachieved ideal, because most superintendents are not engaged with teachers in classrooms on a regular basis. This conclusion, however, is misguided because the instructional leadership roles of superintendent and principal are not the same.

Scholars have found that when superintendents are involved in instructional matters, serve as transformational leaders, and use managerial levers at their disposal to support learning and teaching, they can indirectly improve instruction (Björk, 1993; Bridges, 1982; Cuban, 1984; Fullan, 1991; Hord, 1993; Petersen & Barnett, 2005). A review of research demonstrates that superintendents can and have made a difference in the quality of instructional programs (Stipetic, 1994). Although district size may affect how superintendents enact instructional leadership, several pervasive activities have been documented (Murphy & Hallinger, 1986). In their study of district leadership and student achievement, Marzano and Waters (2009) identified the following leadership behaviors of highly effective superintendents:

- Ensuring collaborative goal setting
- Establishing nonnegotiable goals for achievement and instruction
- Creating board alignment with and support of district goals
- Monitoring achievement and instruction goals
- Allocating resources to support achievement and instruction goals

Other authors have identified relevant behaviors such as recruiting and selecting competent principals and teachers (e.g., Brown & Hunter, 1986), ensuring an effective performance evaluation for professional staff (e.g., Murphy & Hallinger, 1986), and controlling and coordinating the district's technical core (e.g., Peterson, Murphy, & Hallinger, 1987).

Superintendents also are instructional leaders when they create a climate that emphasizes the importance of improving teaching and learning (Björk & Gurley, 2003), function as transformational leaders (Pajak & Glickman, 1989), and provide high-quality, research-based and proficiency-oriented professional development (Daresh, 1991). In sum, a superintendent's instructional leadership role is a form of proactive administration centered on enabling and facilitating the practice of principals and teachers.

The most recent American Association of School Administrators study of superintendents (Kowalski, McCord, Petersen, Young, & Ellerson, 2011) found that instructional leadership is a primary role expectation expressed by school boards. More precisely, school board members anticipate that superintendents will assess learner outcomes, accommodate multiple teaching paradigms, encourage new educational programs needed to meet student needs, and cope with changing curricular priorities.

The extent to which superintendents function as instructional leaders depends on several variables but arguably, socialization is the most influential. Superintendents are socialized to school administration in both graduate school and the workplace (Goodlad, 1990). Professional networks that span school district organizations affirm existing norms, as well as allow new normative leadership styles to diffuse and be adopted. Socialization forces have contributed to the standardization of instructional programs, institutional rules of what society defines as school (Bacharach & Mundell, 1993), structural similarities of school and district organizations (Ogawa, 1992), and conformity in ways of administering (Hoy & Miskel, 2008). As a result, providing leadership to produce substantial change in the way that instruction is organized and delivered has not been a natural characteristic for many experienced superintendents.

Public dissatisfaction and reform initiatives have challenged conventional assumptions about leaders and leadership (Björk, 1996), and in literally

thousands of school districts, superintendents have been changing their behavior. Conventional views centered on control, power, and authority are being replaced by emerging views centered on collegiality and collaboration (Brunner et al., 2002; Elmore, 1999; Kowalski et al., 2011). Alluding to the nexus between increased demands for instructional improvement and reconfigurations of normative administrator behavior, Elmore (1999) concluded that in a knowledge-intensive enterprise such as teaching and learning, complex tasks are not likely to be completed unless leadership responsibility is widely distributed among organizational roles.

Education reform reports released during the early 1980s focused on improving curriculum and classroom instruction through centralized mandates; however, by the middle of the decade emphasis shifted to teacher professionalism and the role of principals in supporting school transformation and enhancing student achievement (Barth, 1990; Schlechty, 1990). Many education commission reports advised that to accomplish systemic and lasting reform, principals and teachers had to directly engage in transformative processes to improve student learning (Hallinger, Bickman, & Davis, 1996). During the 1980s and 1990s, proposals for supporting reform and enhancing student achievement were advanced by emphasizing teacher leadership (McCay, Flora, & Hamilton, 2001) and by shifting decision making to the school level through variations of decentralization, such as site-based management and school-based decision-making councils (Fullan, 1991). Distributed leadership requires educators to think differently "about the purposes of their work, [but also] . . . the skills and knowledge that go with these purposes" (Elmore, 2000, p. 35).

Research findings on instructionally effective schools (Lezotte, 1994; Marzano & Waters, 2009) indicate that administrators who work with and through others tend to be more successful in improving school climate, learning, teaching, and parental involvement. Consequently, sharing authority with those who have been historically excluded from participation in school governance and decision making is arguably beneficial to authentic school reform (Jenni & Maurriel, 1990).

LEADERSHIP FUNCTIONS

A recurring theme in this book is that a superintendent's practice is focused on large-scale, systemic reform and institutional development. Unlike their predecessors who devoted much of their time to managing and protecting the status quo, current practitioners face the challenges of determining what schools should do to meet a wider array of student needs, to ensure that every student learns, and to reconcile policy conflict generated by increasing levels of

social and political diversity. Five primary leadership functions are shown in Figure 7.1.

Visioning

A district or school **vision statement** is often confused with a **mission statement** or philosophy statement. A mission statement details an institution's purpose (i.e., the reason why a district or school exists); a philosophy statement includes espoused values and beliefs (Kowalski, 2010). A vision statement details what the community wants the district to be in the future (Winter, 1995). Therefore, all three documents are elements of a strategic plan for school improvement (see Figure 7.2). The belief that a superintendent should determine the future unilaterally is conceptually flawed and inconsistent with prevailing thought on organizational development (Limerick, Passfield, & Cunnington, 1994). Creating a district vision should be neither a solitary act

Figure 7.1 Superintendent Leadership Functions for School Improvement

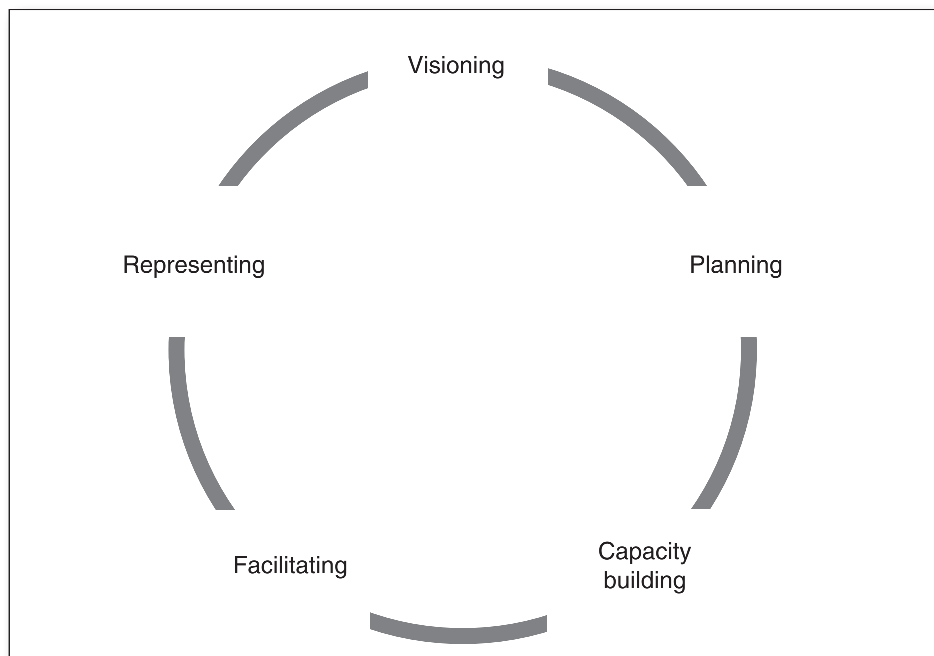
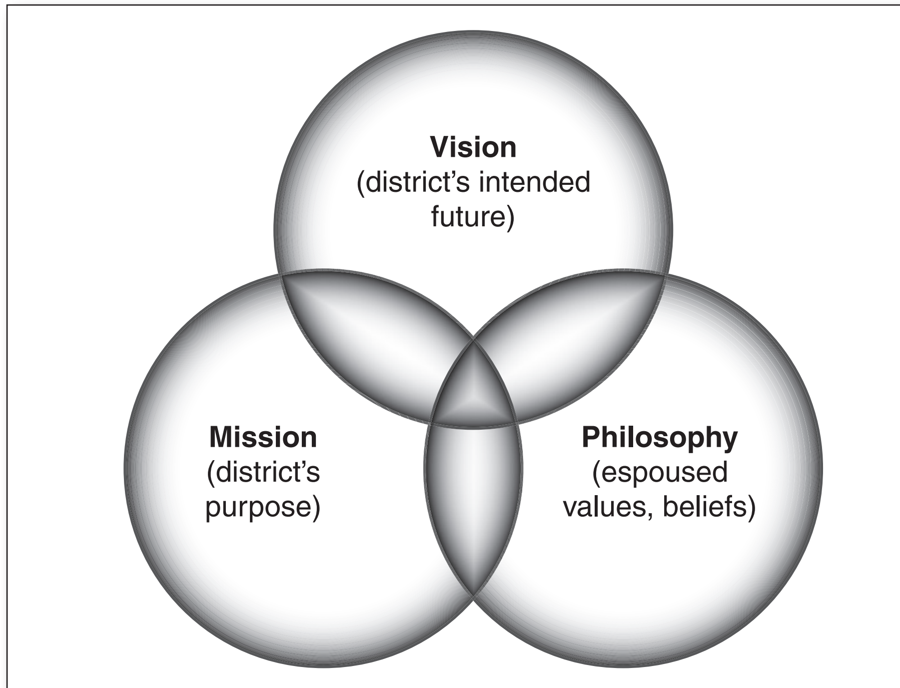


Figure 7.2 Essential Statements for Planning District and School Improvements



nor a short-term endeavor. A vision is instrumental in that it provides parameters for long-term action; that is, it is a symbolic statement that gives meaning to action (Conger, 1989) and a sociological force that generates the shared commitment essential to intended change (Björk, 1995). In essence, the statement represents a collective sense of an attainable desired future.

Effective vision statements have certain attributes. Content in Table 7.2 identifies and explains them. Developing a vision can be viewed as a generative process that enhances and enlarges the organization's capacity to shape its future by providing richer meaning to the collective experiences of exploring school district problems, needs, and strengths. As such, a vision statement is a reference point against which day-to-day activities can be tested (Senge, 1990). Instead of the superintendent determining and then imposing a vision on others, he or she should lead and facilitate democratic discourse and decisions about a preferred future that results in a collective vision.

Planning

Planning is essentially a mechanism for moving a school district from its current state to its vision. District data are analyzed and then integrated with mission and evolving social conditions so that informed resource allocation decisions can be made (Cunningham & Gresso, 1993). Consensus in planning, just as consensus in visioning, helps build a sense of ownership in a change process (Fullan, 2004). Unfortunately, contextual variability precludes any one approach to reaching consensus from being equally effective across districts. Noting this fact, Fullan (2004) advises that superintendents should gather relevant information by visiting schools, meeting with community groups, and studying problems before plunging into visioning and planning activities that require changes in organizational culture and structure.

There are two distinguishable but interrelated planning dimensions: *process* and *technique*. Process details the sequence of planning stages (or steps) and technique identifies approaches used at each stage (Nutt, 1985). Both dimensions can be addressed in various ways, which is one reason why there are multiple planning paradigms. Nutt's (1985) linear and continuous paradigm is frequently cited in the literature. The five steps are (1) formulation (the interface of existing and visionary states), (2) conceptualization (identifying and categorizing needs), (3) detailing (identifying and refining contingency approaches to meeting needs), (4) evaluation (identifying costs, benefits, potential pitfalls, and contingency approaches), and (5) implementation (setting strategies to gain acceptance and identifying implementation techniques).

Planning approaches are usually categorized according to two variables: participation and linearity. With respect to linearity, models range from exclusive (or nonintegrated) to inclusive (or integrated). **Exclusive planning** is carried out by a limited number of specialists, typically district administrators, and it focuses primarily or entirely on the organization as a separate entity. Conversely, **inclusive planning** is carried out by a broad range of stakeholders, and it focuses on the organization from a social system perspective—for example, a school district and the community it serves (Schmidt & Finnigan, 1992). Overall, inclusive planning is preferable for school districts because the success of change efforts often hinges on stakeholder support and cooperation (James, 1995). Other specific benefits of inclusive planning include the following:

- Real needs are more apt to be aligned with community values and beliefs.

Table 7.2 Characteristics of an Effective Vision Statement

Characteristic	*Explanation*
Mission based	The vision provides a picture of what the district should look like in meeting its mission in the future.
Philosophically representative	The statement should represent shared values and beliefs articulated in the district's philosophy statement.
Developed inclusively	All stakeholders (or representatives of all stakeholder groups) should have an opportunity to participate in writing the statement (Casey, 2005).
Realistic	The statement should describe an attainable future state (Winter, 1995).
Credible	The statement should take into account data and best practices (Kowalski, 2011).
Attractive	The statement should appeal to and be supported by the school board, administrators, teachers, and most other stakeholders (Kowalski, 2011).
Descriptive	The statement should specify how future conditions differ from present conditions (Bennis & Nanus, 1985).
Change oriented	The statement should focus on what is to be created rather than describing the status quo (Cunningham & Gresso, 1993).
Mission specific	Rather than redefining mission, the statement should detail what the district should look like in carrying out its mission in the future (Kowalski, 2011).

- Conflict is recognized as an inherent part of democratic planning and appropriate management interventions are deployed.
- Participants are exposed to data that increase their knowledge of the school district and enhance their ability to make rational decisions about goals and strategies.
- Participation nurtures a sense of ownership that almost always has a positive political effect.

With respect to linearity, planning approaches range from **linear** to **nonlinear**. Linear models provide a sequential path (i.e., a step-by-step process). The underlying assumption is that each task builds on the previous task. Planning

participants concentrate on a single stage, supposedly making the process less complex and more efficient. Despite being simple, a linear model can stall at a particular stage causing considerable time delays, systems failure, and even the cessation of planning. In addition, information sharing may be curtailed if separate committees are assigned to complete each stage. Assigning separate committees often is done in more bureaucratic organizations in an effort to emphasize divisional jurisdiction and technical expertise. For example, the assistant superintendent for curriculum and principals may be assigned to work on instructional goals and the assistant superintendent for business and the assistant superintendent's employees are assigned to work on the budget phase.

Nonlinear models provide flexibility, because planning may begin at several different points and two or more stages can be pursued concurrently (Murk & Galbraith, 1986). Conversely, nonlinear approaches are less orderly than linear models, and they can produce coordination problems, especially if they are not facilitated and managed properly. Novice superintendents and superintendents with little experience in district planning typically opt to use linear models.

Today, strategic planning has become a normative process. Unfortunately, the term *strategic planning* is often used indiscriminately to describe various types of planning. Table 7.3 includes information contrasting strategic planning with three other approaches.

Strategic planning emerged from military applications (Stone, 1987). Although some variations include visioning as part of the process, others treat visioning as a prelude. Regardless, strategic planning should always be

Table 7.3 Strategic Planning in Relation to Three Other Planning Approaches

Approach	*Primary Characteristics*
Short-range planning	This term is used to describe any planning process that does not extend beyond 2 years.
Operational planning	This term describes 1-year planning process that focuses on yearly work plans and budgets; it tends to be very specific (Barry, 1998).
Long-range planning	This term describes a vision-focused process that extends beyond 2 years; it is often exclusive and not directly focused on strategies for achieving the vision (McCune, 1986).
Strategic planning	This term also describes a long-range and vision-centered process; however, it typically is inclusive and places considerable emphasis on setting goals and strategies for achieving a vision (Fry, Stoner, & Weinzimmer, 2005).

inclusive, long range, and vision centered (Kowalski, 2011). **Environmental scanning** (i.e., monitoring the environment consistently) is an essential component (Justis, Judd, & Stephens, 1985; Verstegen & Wagoner, 1989). This activity is intended to identify and analyze strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (conditions collectively referred to as *SWOT*). Properly conducted, environmental scanning occurs internally (in a district's organizational context) and externally (in the community, region). Postscanning, key issues, questions, and choices should be addressed, and goals and strategies for achieving the vision are identified, evaluated, and adopted (Winter, 1995). Compared with other planning paradigms, the strategic model is more apt to identify and integrate short-term goals and goal attainment strategies. The effectiveness of strategic planning is often assessed by the following criteria:

- Utility—the value of the process for the district, students, and community
- Appropriateness—the extent to which the process is properly aligned with the district's mission, philosophy, and vision
- Feasibility—the likelihood that the process will achieve its purposes
- Acceptance—the extent to which the process is supported by stakeholders
- Cost–benefits—the likelihood that available resources are sufficient to produce desired outcomes

Strategic planning can be derailed by a district's prevailing institutional culture, insufficient resources, insufficient expertise, and political opposition. These issues are explained in Table 7.4.

Capacity Building

Effective superintendent leadership is focused on building the capacity of principals, teachers, and parents to improve student learning. Firestone (1989) defines capacity as "the extent to which the district has knowledge, skills, personnel, and other resources necessary to carry out decisions" (p. 157). Duke (2004) identified three general elements associated with building organizational capacity for change: (1) a supportive organizational structure, (2) a culture that embraces change, and (3) adequate resources to support capacity-building efforts. Numerous authors (e.g., Berliner & Biddle, 1995; Björk, 1993; Duke, 2004; Hopkins, 2001; Short & Greer, 1997; Short & Rinehart, 1992) have identified the following actions as foundational for capacity building:

Table 7.4 Common Barriers to Strategic Planning in School Districts

Barrier	*Explanation*
District culture	Shared values and traditions embraced by district employees are incongruent with planning (e.g., employees believe they cannot affect the future).
Insufficient resources	Resources (human and material) are not sufficient to do strategic planning (e.g., funds are not available to support environmental scanning).
Insufficient expertise	The superintendent and support staff do not possess the knowledge and skills required to do strategic planning (e.g., they do not know how to build a collective vision or how to determine strategies).
Political opposition	A substantial number of stakeholders oppose either strategic planning or institutional change.

- Altering governance and decision-making structures to institutionalize distributed and transformational forms of leadership
- Aligning and delivering professional development activities with distributed leadership and instructional improvement tasks to enhance the capacity of teachers and principals to successfully implement change initiatives
- Recruiting and selecting teachers, principals, and key central office staff whose views on the future of schooling are consistent with district goals
- Providing adequate resources to support planned change initiatives
- Valuing the use of data to improve teaching and learning
- Building community capacity

These actions promote collective efforts and nurture a district culture conducive to change. Equally notable, superintendents occupy a strategic position and have managerial levers at their disposal that can be deployed to launch and sustain school improvement (Duke, 2008).

Successful change requires a district culture in which teachers and principals value learning and invest time and effort to continuously improve education for all children. Without involving professional staff in developing, implementing, and modifying curricula and pedagogical strategies, a superintendent's ability

to improve schools is limited. Moreover, you should note that although concepts such as site-based management and school-based decision making provide platforms for broadening participation, they do not ensure this outcome (Björk, 1993).

Enabling others to be productive also includes staff development because the complexity of the education process and the challenges of educational change make it unlikely that necessary skills will be acquired without planned interventions (Duke, 2004). In recent years, professional development has been moving away from short-term venues that emphasize "seat time" and "credit hours." The preferred models are research based, continuous, and performance assessed (Björk, Kowalski, & Browne-Ferrigno, 2005). Joyce and Showers (1983) found that different professional development configurations produced different outcomes on learners. The highest level of transfer from professional development to practice occurs when mentoring is added to a theory–demonstration–practice–feedback configuration. Unfortunately, most professional development programs tend to focus on concepts, some demonstration, little practice, and scant attention to either feedback or mentoring (Gottsman, 2000).

School improvement, in general, and organizational problem solving, in particular, are dependent on the commitment, creativity, and intelligence of the district's employees (Astuto & Clark, 1992). In this vein, superintendents function as enablers when they make wise investments in human capital; that is, they recruit, hire, and support new teachers committed to instructional improvement. Such decisions help erect a culture of learning and innovation (Smylie & Hart, 1999; Sykes, 1999). Resource allocation decisions, both for employing staff and for supporting their practice, are equally pertinent (Duke, 2004).

Because school districts are dependent on local communities for political and financial support, superintendents must assess and nurture community capacity to ensure support for educational initiatives (Duke, 2004; Hoyle, Björk, Collier, & Glass, 2005). Interaction with parents, citizens, interest groups, business leaders, and other local government officials expands citizen knowledge about district education programs and creates opportunities for inclusive decision making (Fusarelli, Kowalski, & Petersen, 2011; Odden & Odden, 1994). Districts derive substantial benefits from working with stakeholders, including (a) increased financial support (political capital) (Valenzuela & Dornbush, 1994), (b) positive dispositions and interrelationships among citizens (social capital) (Smylie & Hart, 1999), and (c) increased citizens' knowledge and skills (human capital) (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1990).

Facilitating

A central function of the superintendent as a transformative leader is facilitating organizational change, including altering decisions and governance structures (Murphy & Louis, 1999). In this regard, facilitative leadership is associated with increasing teachers' involvement in, and commitment to, democratic decision-making processes. Facilitative approaches promoted by superintendents and principals—including building trust, democratic decision making, empowerment, innovation and risk taking—contribute to teachers' sense of efficacy in initiating and sustaining change (Rollow & Bryk, 1995). Superintendents and central office support staff can be instrumental in protecting implementation efforts from interference (McCarthy & Still, 1993), and they are highly effective if they rely on consensus rather than coercion and lead through facilitation rather than through commands and tight controls (Murphy, 1995).

A superintendent's first task as a school-improvement facilitator is to develop a sense of collegiality among administrators and teachers by nurturing their continuing professional growth (Cunningham & Gresso, 1993) and by creating a climate of shared commitment, mutual trust, and understanding (Razik & Swanson, 2001). In addition, the superintendent is expected to (a) identify participants' talents, knowledge, and skills; (b) encourage creative thinking; (c) ensure that information essential to framing and solving relevant problems is accessible; (d) acquire necessary resources; and (e) model group process skills (Cunningham & Cordeiro, 2000).

Representing

Superintendents are the visible leaders of their school districts, and this responsibility has both formal and informal dimensions (Blumberg, 1985). Symbolically, they represent their districts when they are serving in an official capacity and even when they are not. Therefore, their appearance and behavior are no less relevant when they are shopping at the mall or having dinner at a local restaurant. In most communities, superintendents live in a virtual fishbowl, and their school boards expect them to project an image congruent with the district's espoused philosophy (Kowalski, 1995).

The representing role is especially relevant to educating the public about needs, strategic planning, and vision attainment. Without being committed to school improvement and without enthusiastically supporting change, a superintendent almost certainly will lack credibility as the district's spokesperson.

NORMATIVE LEADERSHIP DISPOSITIONS

Leadership also is studied in relation to strategies and styles. For at least the past 3 decades, superintendents have been encouraged to be democratic, ethical, transformational, and servant leaders. Collectively, these expectations provide a mosaic of normative standards related to instructional leadership and organizational improvement.

Democratic Leadership

Increased demands for citizen participation as an expression of community control have rekindled expectations that superintendents epitomize democratic, moral, and ethical leadership (Beck & Foster, 1999). Burns (1978) observed that democratic leadership is anchored in three realities:

1. Relationships between a leader and the organization's members are bound by collaborative efforts to achieve mutual goals.
2. Leaders recognize that the organization's members grant them the authority to act on their behalf, and further, this authority may be withdrawn.
3. Leaders have a moral responsibility to fulfill social contracts with the organization's members.

In addition, democratic leaders value the public's lawful claim to its schools (Björk & Gurley, 2005) and exhibit the capacity to create one community out of many voices. Unlike conditions affecting practitioners in most other professions, superintendents must apply their professional knowledge in a context where political acceptance is essential (Kowalski, 2003). Specifically, superintendents face conflicting expectations that their decisions are guided by professional knowledge and that their decisions are guided by the will of the people (Wirt & Kirst, 2001). In light of these opposing views, highly effective superintendents find ways to promote democratic discourse and civic engagement (Fusarelli et al., 2011).

Moral and Ethical Leadership

Moral leadership is framed by the unending scrutiny of an administrator's use of power and decision choices (Greenfield, 1991). As Sendjaya (2005)

posits "good leadership is impossible without the presence of morality. Therefore, a sound understanding of leadership necessitates the inclusion of objective moral values" (p. 84). Moral and ethical superintendents are committed to represent all stakeholders. Equally noteworthy, they attempt to meet the needs of all students and resist temptations to engage in political actions that compromise this essential commitment (Sergiovanni, 1994). They abide by the ethical codes of their profession and the ethical standards set by the communities they serve.

Ethical constructs are commonly perceived in legal contexts, but the meaning of administrative ethics is broader than this. Referring to administrators in all types of organizations, Blanchard and Peale (1988) proposed a simple, three-part "ethics check" for leaders: "Is it legal? Is it balanced? How will it make me feel about myself?" (p. 27).

In school administration, ethics extend beyond legalities to issues such as bias, discrimination, nepotism, violating confidentiality, commitment to work responsibilities, and playing politics for purposes of self-interest (Howlett, 1991; Kimbrough & Nunnery, 1988). Starratt (1995) formulated three foundational themes for ethical practice: the ethic of critique, the ethic of justice, and the ethic of caring. The first addresses issues such as hierarchy, privilege, and power (e.g., Who controls public schools? Who defines the future of public education?). The second addresses issues such as democratic participation and equal access to programs and resources (e.g., How are scarce resources allocated? How are critical decisions made?). The third addresses issues focusing on human relationships such as cooperation, shared commitment, and friendship (e.g., What do personal relationships demand from superintendents, other administrators, and teachers?). While the first two themes have received attention in school administration literature, the third has not (Starratt, 2003). Moral leadership requires attention to what schools are all about and what they do, how decisions are made, as well as the nature of those decisions. Sergiovanni (1992) referred to this process as *purposing*. Purposing allows members of the school community to identify goals and strategies that can be supported by all.

Transformational Leadership

As noted previously in this chapter, transformational leadership emphasizes morally purposeful and elevating behavior that is accomplished by working with and through others (Bennis & Nanus, 1985) to meet shared organizational improvement goals (Rost, 1991). The central idea of transformational leadership is empowering others for the purpose of bringing about significant change (Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Burns, 1978; Leithwood, Begley, & Cousins,

1994). Thus, it involves promoting the beliefs that reform is a total organization phenomenon and that motivating school personnel and clients to assume responsibility for pursuing pertinent goals is essential (Ogawa & Bossert, 1995).

Transformational leadership also entails building both capacity and commitment for change. Leithwood (1994) describes the following operational elements of this concept:

- Building a shared vision of the school
- Creating and aligning school and district goals
- Creating an intellectually stimulating environment
- Nurturing a positive, learning-oriented culture
- Providing individual support and development opportunities
- Modeling best practices and learning-oriented organizational values
- Creating authentic organizational structures that support shared decision-making venues
- Establishing and reifying high expectations for student and adult learning

Research (e.g., Bogler, 2001) demonstrates that the behavior of transformational administrators can directly and indirectly influence teachers' job satisfaction by virtue of affecting their perceptions of their profession and their professional responsibilities. When principals and teachers see school improvement as a shared responsibility, they are more inclined to participate in visioning and planning, to enthusiastically pursue implementation, and to assume ownership for school reform initiatives.

Servant Leadership

The idea that administrators should serve others was formally introduced into management literature in the late 1970s. One of the first concepts, known as **servant leadership,** was constructed by Robert Greenleaf (1977). Specifically, he encouraged superintendents and other administrators to serve others, primarily by placing stakeholder needs, aspirations, and interests above personal needs, aspirations, and interests. Some conceptualizations of servant leadership, however, have been controversial because empirical evidence supporting effectiveness is missing (Washington, Sutton, & Field, 2006) and because they posit that employee needs and interests always trump organizational interests (e.g., Graham, 1991). As conceptualized here, service-oriented superintendents are neither selfish nor serve only school employee interests. Instead, they are ethical and moral administrators

committed to serving student, employee, community, and district interests concurrently. They consciously evaluate multiple needs and interests, and seek to make fair, balanced, and effective decisions.

Unfortunately, servant leadership remains a vague concept for many administrators (Block, 2005). Addressing this concern, van Dierendonck (2011) wrote,

> Servant leadership is displayed by leaders who combine their motivation to lead with a need to serve. Personal characteristics and culture are positioned alongside the motivational dimension. Servant leadership is demonstrated by empowering and developing people; by expressing humility, authenticity, interpersonal acceptance, and stewardship; and by providing direction. A high-quality dyadic relationship, trust, and fairness are expected to be the most important mediating processes. (p. 1254)

Williamson (2008) suggests that servant leadership is similar to what Plato suggested in *The Republic*; that is, it is the ultimate form of leadership—one that focuses on the good of the society and citizens. Although servant leadership and transformational leadership are quite similar in that they both are focused on achieving institutional and personal goals (Ehrhart, 2004), servant leadership includes "a moral responsibility to serve all stakeholders, especially subordinates" (Schneider & George, 2011, p. 63).

For Further Reflection

This chapter examined superintendent leadership roles. The ongoing quest for school improvement has placed added emphasis on change initiatives, elevating the importance of functions such as visioning, planning, collaboration, teamwork, and transformational leadership. These new ways of leading are directly focused on increasing the effectiveness of superintendents as instructional leaders.

As you consider what you read in this chapter, answer the following questions:

1. Superintendents are expected to be leaders and managers. What are the differences between these two roles?
2. What are the differences among a mission statement, a philosophy statement, and a vision statement?
3. What role should a superintendent play in developing a shared vision statement?

4. What is the difference between long-range planning and strategic planning?
5. What are the advantages of linear planning and nonlinear planning?
6. What are transformational leadership and transactional leadership?
7. What is democratic leadership? What are the advantages of this type of leadership?
8. What is servant leadership? How does servant leadership differ from transformational leadership?
9. What are the primary contributions a superintendent can make as an instructional leader?
10. What are Theory X and Theory Y? What is the value of these theories?
11. What is ethical and moral leadership? What factors may deter a superintendent from behaving ethically and morally?

Case Study Discussion Questions

Waiting to Make Changes

1. If you were Dr. Bernelli, how would you interpret the type of superintendent the school board is seeking?
2. Dr. Bernelli was very candid with the school board about his leadership style. How do you characterize his leadership style?
3. Not knowing precisely the board's expectations for the next superintendent, did Dr. Bernelli err in being candid? Why or why not?
4. Can a superintendent be both decisive and collaborative? Why or why not?
5. Dr. Bernelli stated that it may take 2 or more years to sufficiently learn conditions in the district. Do you agree with his estimate?
6. A board member indicated that Dr. Eddelman considered difficult decisions to be the superintendent's responsibility? Do you agree with Dr. Eddelman's position?
7. If you were interviewing for the superintendency in the Oak Meadow School District, what questions would you ask the school board about their expectations for superintendent leadership?

Key Terms

Administration 192
Environmental scanning 205
Exclusive planning 202
Inclusive planning 202
Instructional leadership 192
Leadership 191
Leadership strategy 194
Leadership style 194
Linear planning 203
Management 192
Mission statement 200
Nonlinear planning 203
Servant leadership 211
Situational leadership 197
Transactional leadership 195
Transformational leadership 193
Vision statement 200

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