

## CHAPTER ONE

# Introduction

*“The old leadership model—in other words, just being a manager—doesn’t work. . . . Now school leaders have to know teaching inside and out. They have to know best practices. They have to know how to structure a school to support teaching and learning. They have to know about professional development for ongoing learning—job-embedded, collaborative types of learning.”*

—Wendy Katz

**T**his book represents one aspect of a principal’s work. Each book in the series addresses a specific, important role or function of a principal. Discussing each separately, however, is quite artificial and a bit contrived. In fact, all seven forms of leadership (instructional, cultural, ethical/spiritual, school-community, operational, strategic, and collaborative) that make up this series of *What Every Principal Should Know About . . .* form an undifferentiated whole. To talk about, for instance, collaboration without understanding the cultural context in which it occurs is shortsighted and limiting. School culture and climate impact the nature and form of collaboration within a particular school.

The work of Hargreaves and Dawe (1989) is relevant in this context. They discuss four types of cultures that may influence the degree or extent to which collaboration takes place in a school:

1. *Fragmented individualism*—Often representing the traditional conception of school governance, the cultural milieu of fragmented

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individualism operates with the principal as authoritative overseer of a group of individual teachers who work in isolation of each other. Information is communicated in a top-down fashion, often by administrative fiat. Relationships are usually impersonal and bureaucratic. Teaching and learning are often viewed as simple processes in which teachers transfer knowledge to passive learners. The school functions in predictable, fixed ways. Individuality is subservient to organizational needs and demands.

2. *Balkanization*—Similar to fragmented individualism, the cultural milieu of balkanization operates in a competitive environment in which subgroups within the organization vie for resources. Disparate, disjointed cliques operate in isolation of one another and with the school at large. Few schoolwide improvement initiatives ever have a chance of succeeding within this fragmented environment.

3. *Contrived collegiality*—Although this is not the place to discuss this concept at length, one essential premise involves the notion that a sense of collegiality is attempted with few, if any, long-lasting positive results for both the participants or the organization. A principal, for instance, might feign collegiality or collaboration by forming a committee to distribute educational resources. But in the end, the principal may have complete veto or decision-making authority to overrule or simply ignore committee decisions. Such efforts at collegial relations might offer some sort of temporary personal benefits to the participants (e.g., some time out of the classroom to meet), but often these benefits are ephemeral and certainly not influential on a schoolwide scale.

4. *True collaborative cultures*—In this ideal cultural milieu, teachers and administrators may form “deep personal” (Hargreaves & Dawe, 1989, p. 14) relationships that enhance the school in significant ways. In such an environment, personal relationships are fostered within a learning community. Diversity is appreciated and fostered throughout the school. Problem solving is seen as a schoolwide responsibility, although no easy solutions may be at hand. It is only through deep personal commitments to work together that solutions can surface. Teaching and learning are engaging, complex enterprises. A sense of self-efficacy is affirmed, and individuality is valued above the needs of the organization. Leadership is distributed, situational, and ongoing.

It is within this latter cultural milieu that this book is framed. Collaborative leadership reflects an educational paradigm based on the following assumptions:

- You, as principal, play the most vital role in facilitating (i.e., establishing and sustaining) such a cultural milieu.
- Quality education for all depends on quality learning for educators.
- Learning is complex and differentiated.
- Educators participate as collegial partners to enhance school/classroom improvement.
- Diversity is appreciated and celebrated, and cultural understanding among all people in a free, democratic society is supported.
- Educational leadership emerges for all quarters of the school organization.
- Educational leaders are willing to take risks, seek innovation, and work as transformative leaders in order to promote student learning.
- Educators have a moral responsibility to make a difference in the lives of their students, promoting high achievement for all.
- Schools cannot improve without the systematic and ongoing participation of the many. (See, e.g., Glanz & Sullivan, 2000.)

### Reflective Questions

1. Consider leaders you have known. Assess their collaborative leadership skills. What stands out as particularly noteworthy? Unworthy?
2. Assess the degree to which a “true collaborative culture” exists in your school. How can you contribute to a more collegial, cooperative, and collaborative climate?
3. What collaborative leadership challenges do you face? Explain.
4. React to the nine assumptions listed above. Which make the most sense to you?

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The major themes of this book and series on the principalship are as follows:

- The principal models collaborative leadership in all aspects of a school's work. Collaboration is necessary in order to best meet the ever-increasing demands placed on schools, and specifically on the principal. To the extent that you, as principal, foster a sense of esprit de corps, you will likely succeed in your endeavors. As Robbins and Alvy (2003) succinctly state, "a key factor in the development of a collaborative school is the principal's role" (p. 145).
- Collaborative leadership is instrumental in fostering a democratic learning community. The work of Sergiovanni (1994) is as instructive as it is relevant. Democratic communities embrace collaboration as a chief way to involve others in an active citizenry. Sergiovanni explains:

Active citizenship forces everyone to get into each other's pockets by requiring them to come to grips with a collective image of school life, to work together to solve problems, to invest together in the welfare of the community, and to live together in accordance with community norms. (p. 123)

Sergiovanni continues, "In a democratic community, the official culture is not imposed by one on another but is created together." Sergiovanni underscores the commitment we all must have to ensure that meaningful collaboration occurs. He states, "Democratic communities make demands on all of their members. Teachers, administrators, and students all have obligations and duties to each other and to the school that must be met." He concludes, "These demands let members know that they are needed by the community and belong to the community, thus further solidifying the ties that bind and bond" (p. 123).

- Fostering positive, ongoing, and meaningful collaboration takes much time and commitment, but the rewards are monumental. When collaboration works, ownership of programs and practices schoolwide is a shared responsibility. Fault lies with no single individual. Problems are seen from an institutional or organizational perspective. Problem solving becomes a group responsibility. Moreover, in a collaborative school atmosphere, failure is

viewed as a step towards success. Collaboration promotes positive thinking and a sense of optimism that pervades the entire school.

- To many, collaboration is “the single most important factor” for successful schooling (Newmann & Wehlage, 1995, as quoted in Robbins & Alvy, 2003, p. 146). Robbins and Alvy explain further that “schools that are able to reach such a state report a sense of synergy, creativity, and a capacity for innovation and learning uncommon to those who function in isolation” (p. 146).

This book and series are also aligned with standards established by the prominent Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC). ELCC standards are commonly accepted by most educational organizations concerned with preparing high-quality educational leaders and as such are most authoritative (Wilmore, 2002). The ELCC, an arm of the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education, developed six leadership standards used widely in principal preparation. These standards formed the basis for this book and series:

\*1.0: Candidates who complete the program are educational leaders who have the knowledge and ability to promote the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a school or district vision of learning supported by the school community.

2.0: Candidates who complete the program are educational leaders who have the knowledge and ability to promote the success of all students by promoting a positive school culture, providing an effective instructional program, applying best practices to student learning, and designing comprehensive professional growth plans for staff.

3.0: Candidates who complete the program are educational leaders who have the knowledge and ability to promote the success of all students by managing the organization, operations, and resources in a way that promotes a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.

\*4.0: Candidates who complete the program are educational leaders who have the knowledge and ability to promote the success of

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all students by collaborating with families and other community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.

5.0: Candidates who complete the program are educational leaders who have the knowledge and ability to promote the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairly, and in an ethical manner.

6.0: Candidates who complete the program are educational leaders who have the knowledge and ability to promote the success of all students by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.

\*This standard is addressed in this book.

Readers should also familiarize themselves with standards from the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium, the National Association of Elementary School Principals, and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (see, e.g., [http://www.ccsso.org/projects/Interstate\\_School\\_Leaders\\_Licensure\\_Consortium/](http://www.ccsso.org/projects/Interstate_School_Leaders_Licensure_Consortium/), <http://www.boyercenter.org/basicschool/naesp.shtml>, and [http://www.nassp.org/s\\_nassp/index.asp](http://www.nassp.org/s_nassp/index.asp)).

Another important point to make in this introduction is for you to realize that although with other forms of leadership (e.g., instructional, operational, and strategic), you must take specific actions to address them, and at times you don't actually have to actively engage in them, as a collaborative leader you are continually interacting with others by advising, coaching, sharing, visioning, and partnering all day long. Your daily activities, actions, memoranda, e-mails, formal and informal meetings, personal contacts, decisions, and so forth reflect, shape, and influence your role as collaborative leader.

### Reflective Questions

1. Which of the themes or core values above make the most sense to you?
2. Which of the themes or core values above make the least sense to you? Explain.

3. How do you perceive your role as collaborative leader? What specific actions must you take to be effective? Be specific.
4. What do you do on a daily basis that affirms your commitment to collaborative leadership? Provide details with examples.

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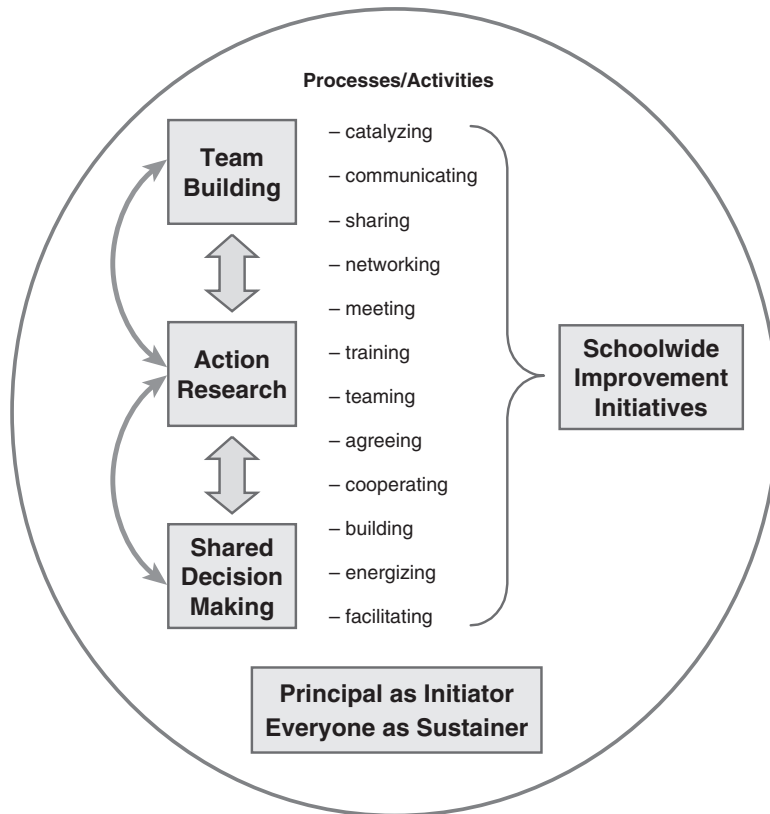
In order to establish a framework for the three main chapters, it is important to understand the “Three-Phase Collaborative Leadership Model for Whole-School Improvement” (see Figure 1.1), which serves as the conceptual framework for *What Every Principal Should Know About Collaborative Leadership*. This book does not purport to present the definitive work on principal collaborative leadership. Rather, a more modest objective is intended. In order to provide you, the reader, with a beginning, yet solid, framework for establishing collaborative leadership, I have developed this three-phase approach.

Team building, action research, and shared decision making are three, although not the only, vital components of any collaborative leadership initiative. The principal, as collaborative leader, initiates or generates interest in collaboration by word and deed. Research-based team-building strategies are particularly effective for training staff in collaborative beliefs and behaviors. Although ongoing and fully integrated, as Figure 1.1 demonstrates with the use of arrows, team-building techniques are a good way to start building support for schoolwide collaboration. Participants learn, among other things, how to work as a team through negotiation, compromise, and consensus building. Developing deep personal commitments to the institutional mission is of utmost concern. Forging personal friendships, although nice, is not necessary. Team building will create an atmosphere in which education professionals learn how to coordinate and cooperate for the benefit of all students and for the school as a whole.

Once a degree of teaming is achieved, the principal can initiate action research projects aimed at grade-level or whole-school issues. Action research, a disciplined inquiry used by practitioners to solve everyday problems, is an excellent (and research-based) strategy that reflects and supports collaboration. During the

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**Figure 1.1** A Three-Phase Collaborative Leadership Model for Whole-School Improvement



action research cycle, participants identify problems, usually instructional, to solve. After data are collected and analyzed, conclusions are drawn. Action guidelines are then identified for implementation and field testing. The action research cycle is cyclical. A collaborative team (at a grade level or on a schoolwide basis) could undertake, for instance, action research in order to inform decision making regarding the new literature-based reading series.

The third phase represents an attempt to encourage shared decision making, a critical aspect of collaborative leadership.



Although participants may have been involved in ongoing team-building practice and action research committee work, the knowledge and skills necessary to function as decision makers are unique. As Figure 1.1 indicates, all three phases relate to one another on an ongoing basis. Although the principal may initiate collaboration, eventual success depends on everyone's input. Collaboration cannot be mandated by fiat, nor can it be controlled by the principal. Buy-in by the staff is necessary for its success. Although the principal might encourage participation, facilitate meetings, encourage communication, and develop reward mechanisms, it is the ultimate responsibility of the participants to ensure that the initiative is sustained. When these phases work at their best and problems are addressed at the systemic level, the outcome is whole-school improvement.

Allow me to offer a word on chapter format and presentation of information. Information in each of the three main chapters is presented as concisely as possible to make for easy and quick reference reading. Each chapter begins with boxed material called "What You Should Know About." The box will list and briefly explain the concepts covered in each chapter. Certainly, each chapter will not cover every bit of information there is to know about a given topic, as mentioned earlier. Each chapter culls, though, essential knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for a successful principal.

A brief word on chapter organization is in order to facilitate reading. The first chapter includes some best practices for helping you create team spirit via use of selected team-building techniques. After this introduction to some of these practical strategies that form the basis for future collaborations, the second chapter reviews best practices for fostering collaborative action research in order to promote student learning and organizational effectiveness. The final chapter highlights best practices for establishing, facilitating, and assessing shared decision-making opportunities. Engaging and encouraging collaborative decision making is the heart of collaborative leadership. Taken together, these three chapters provide you with information and strategies that promote a sense of collaborative inquiry. This book is not meant to be the definitive treatise on collaborative leadership, but rather to raise some relevant issues for your consideration. It is my hope that the ideas in this book will give you pause to think about

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your own collaborative style in your interactions with others and encourage you to ponder some of the best ways to promote collegiality and cooperation among faculty and staff.

As a concluding activity to this Introduction, read the boxed material below, which contains 10 quotations meant to inspire, but more importantly to provoke critical thinking about your role as collaborative leader. Read each quotation and ask yourself these questions:

- What does the author convey about collaboration, directly or indirectly (in other words, what's the message in a nutshell)?
- Critique the quotation. Does the thought reflect your beliefs? Explain.
- What practical step(s) could you take to actualize the idea behind each quotation?

### **Some Key Quotations Related to Collaborative Leadership**

"The purpose of collaboration is to create a shared vision and joint strategies to address concerns that go beyond the purview of any particular party."

—David D. Chrislip and Carl E. Larson

"A learning organization is an organization in which people at all levels are, collectively, continually enhancing their capacity to create things they really want to create."

—Peter Senge

"Leadership is not something possessed only by a select few people in high positions. We are all involved in the leadership process, and we are all capable of being effective leaders. Through collaboration with others, you can make a difference."

—Susan R. Komives, Nance Lucas, and Timothy R. McMahon

"When we choose co-creation [collaboration], we end separation, the root cause of conflict. . . . They know through responsible participation that they can empower each other and ultimately their institutions and society, thereby creating a life that is meaningful and satisfying for everyone."

—Thomas F. Crum

"It's a mistake to go it alone. By creating alliances even before your initiative becomes public, you can increase the probability that both you and your ideas will succeed. For the next meeting, personally make the advance phone calls, test the waters, refine your approach, and line up supporters. . . . Know their existing alliances and loyalties so you realize how far you are asking them to stretch to collaborate with you."

—Ronald A. Heifetz and Marty Linsky

"Time is a precious resource in schools. Therefore it is essential that collaborative time in schools is focused on capacity building to assure high levels of quality student learning."

—Pam Robbins and Harvey B. Alvy

"Great discoveries and improvements invariably involve the cooperation of many minds. I may be given credit for having blazed the trail but when I look at the subsequent developments I feel the credit is due to others rather than to myself."

—Alexander Graham Bell

"'Networking' [means] 'exchanging information for mutual benefit.'

"'Coordinating' [means] 'exchanging information and altering activities for mutual benefit and to achieve a common purpose.'

"'Cooperation' [means] 'exchanging information, altering activities, and sharing resources for mutual benefit and a common purpose.'

"'Collaboration' [means] 'exchanging information, altering activities, sharing resources, and enhancing the capacity of another for mutual benefit and to achieve a common purpose.'"

—Arthur Himmelman, as quoted  
by Kathy Gardner Chadwick

"When teachers share in decision-making, they become committed to the decisions that emerge. They buy into the decision; they feel a sense of ownership; therefore, they are more likely to see that decisions are actually implemented."

—C. H. Weiss, J. Cambone, and A. Wyeth

"What distinguishes leadership from other types of relationships is that, when it works well, it enables people to collaborate in the service of shared visions, values, and missions."

—Lee G. Bolman

## CASE STUDY AND REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

*Kathy Bobbitt always wanted to become a teacher. She recalls how, in her early childhood, she used to role-play “teacher” with her younger brothers. “I was so taken with the power I thought my teachers had. Since I was reticent, even withdrawn at times, and lacking confidence, such role playing gave me the ‘umppf’ I needed.” Kathy’s reasons for becoming a teacher had matured since her youthful days. As a caring and sensitive individual, Kathy knew her calling was to help others achieve their goals. She had learned so much from her teachers that she wanted to “give something back to others.” “There is nothing like teaching . . . helping someone else achieve her personal goals.” In the ensuing years Kathy earned several teacher-of-the-year awards and in one year earned the district’s coveted “community service award.” Well-liked and now quite extroverted, Kathy developed a sterling reputation as a teacher.*

*After her 11th year of teaching, she decided to enroll in an advanced certificate program leading to state certification as a school administrator. “I love teaching and probably would love doing so for 20 more years. However, I think I want to now serve in a position of ‘different’ influence.” She explained to her partner, Sue, that she felt serving as a principal would allow her to “help so many others.” Although she acknowledged the importance of a classroom teacher, she realized that schoolwide, enduring, positive change would not occur unless addressed at the organizational or institutional level. Teacher leadership positions beyond the classroom or grade level were undeveloped in her school district. That’s why she decided to become a principal.*

*One of the primary projects she undertook as part of her leadership program was framing a vision statement or educational platform that would reflect her commitments to educational leadership. She was a fervent believer in collaboration. “Collaboration,” she maintained, “is a process whereby educators at different levels of influence work together in systematic, intentional ways in order to effect schoolwide learning for all students.” Kathy’s vision statement, culled in part below, received noteworthy attention from her professors and eventually from school leaders. Within a short time, she was offered her first principalship, during which time she would try to actualize her vision of collaborative leadership.*

*In regard to her vision of instructional climate, governance, and leadership, Kathy wrote the following (note that the excerpts below are culled, in part and with permission, from Janice Micali, a student in a leadership program leading to principalship certification):*

The realization of student outcomes is inextricably tied to the instructional climate. My vision is of the school as safe harbor or sanctuary in which students, staff, and parents feel safe and nurtured, and in which there is an atmosphere of personal responsibility and mutual respect. The culture of the school would support **collaboration**, foster reflection, and celebrate accomplishment. Multiple opportunities for celebration of individual and schoolwide success in all areas of achievement would be developed. Student work would be prominently displayed throughout the building, and efforts to acknowledge each student's strengths would be encouraged. Classrooms would be print and material rich, and students would have daily access to technology. A code of appropriate behavior would be developed, agreed upon, and modeled by all. Consequences for inappropriate behavior would be clear and consistently enforced by all members of the school community.

The school climate would also support professional development that is an outgrowth of self-assessment and reflection, and that supports **collaboration and collegiality**. All staff members have the capacity for professional growth. My vision is to create a culture that supports teachers in fulfilling this capacity by providing new teacher training, leadership opportunities, meaningful staff development, [and] experience in innovative educational practices and strategies. Opportunities for staff to develop and refine their instruction would be organic, teacher-directed, and sustained throughout the year. Flexible programming would provide time for teachers to participate in weekly study groups to examine student work and teacher practice in the context of the standards. Each study group would follow specific protocols and be facilitated by a peer coach. **Collaboration** would be encouraged at every turn. Teachers would participate in weekly peer observations, and classrooms would serve as demonstration sites for specific organizational and instructional practices. Structured opportunities for daily interaction among staff around instructional issues and ongoing reflection and **collaboration** among colleagues about student work and outcomes would replace one-day trainings and workshops. Ample professional resources would be housed in the professional library so as to support all aspects of the professional development program.

Time and funding for teachers to participate in professional conferences would be provided, with the expectation that they would turnkey this training. In this way, a cadre of in-house specialists

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would be developed to build schoolwide capacity and foster the development of a community of learners. Parents would also have ample opportunities to develop the capacity to be partners in the children's education. My vision is to create a **collaborative** culture.

Essential to the realization of my educational vision is a model of governance and leadership that supports, in the words of Hargreaves and Dawe (1989), "**true collaboration**" and a sense of personal accountability to a set of guiding principles, and that includes and encourages multiple perspectives. In this model, the principal would be responsible for providing the time and the structure for students, staff, parents, and other school community members to openly participate in some aspect of the governance process. This would require identifying specific issues and constituencies and creating multiple governance forums, as well as ensuring that **all stakeholders are involved** at some point as appropriate. This includes not only teachers, parents, and students, but custodial and cafeteria staff, health providers, and members of community-based organizations. The principal would also create an environment that fosters open, **collaborative** dialogue among the various stakeholders and that provides training in the new paradigm of the **shared decision-making** process. In this environment, the goals of the school would be developed **collaboratively** with student achievement as the focus, and the progress toward the goals would be assessed through a process of ongoing reflection and **collaboration**. The specific structure of the assessment component would be developed by the school community and would incorporate multiple assessment models, both formal and informal. Responsibility for student achievement would be shared by all stakeholders, and finger pointing and blaming would be replaced by an atmosphere of **collegiality and collaboration** in which each member of the school community would take responsibility for the successes and the failures.

As the leader in this school culture, I would model the values, beliefs, and behavior I sought to engender. My leadership style would be proactive, flexible, **collegial**, and reflective. I would be genuine in my commitment to a **collaborative** approach to leadership and [would] sustain a constant focus on the fundamental belief that student achievement must drive all aspects of the educational process. I would maintain an open-door policy, seeking input from members of the school community and participating in the

*reflective process. I would actively work to secure the resources needed to support the instructional process and to develop and sustain a supportive and open relationship with the district and the community. I would lead by example, and demonstrate those qualities of integrity, focus, and mutual respect that are fundamental to my vision of a school community. I would share in both the joys of our successes and in the struggles of our setbacks. I would be coach, facilitator, and exemplar, sustaining the vision and holding the guiding principles continually in the forefront of all our endeavors.*

*Although all this seems idealistic, I truly believe in my vision and will work my utmost to achieve my goals. I will not be thwarted. Not because I am overly confident or—heaven forbid—arrogant, but because when a principal **involves others** in leading, sustained commitment to the school is assured. I believe in the power of the many. I believe that teachers will work earnestly and **collaboratively** when encouraged and acknowledged for doing so.*

### Reflective Questions

1. Why is Kathy so committed to collaborative leadership?
2. How realistic is her vision statement?
3. Given information about Kathy, what specific strategies might she employ to facilitate collaborative leadership?
4. How does your vision of the work of a principal differ from Kathy's statement?
5. What obstacles is she likely to encounter, and how might she "thwart" or overcome them?

As mentioned in the Introduction, the first chapter that follows builds upon the preceding information by highlighting some "best practices" for helping you create the team spirit so crucial for collaborative leadership. These ideas are not meant to be exhaustive of the topic, but merely a means to encourage thinking about what it means to serve collaboratively.