

Preface

In the fall of 1996, I (Marty Krovetz) held a series of focus group meetings in two school districts in our region, talking with more than 100 teachers from the Oak Grove and Campbell School Districts about what they might want as a focus for a collaborative master's program that partnered the College of Education at San Jose State University (SJSU) with their districts. I had anticipated that they would say literacy or instructional technology, and I would have worked with the appropriate faculty at SJSU to develop such a program. However, teachers said to me,

We are being asked to play increasingly important leadership roles in our schools and districts, and we are flying by the seats of our pants. We want to participate in meetings that matter. We want to be productive. *We need a master's program that focuses on teacher leadership!*

My heart pounded. My smile was impossible to conceal. They were speaking to my passion. During the 14 years I served as a high school principal, I was proud of how well I worked with and mentored teacher leaders and how well many teacher leaders had mentored me. I knew that I was not the most *powerful* person on campus, that the school secretary, head custodian, and many teachers had far more influence than I did. I believe deeply that schools cannot be successful and sustain the hard work of challenging all students to use their minds and hearts well unless teacher leaders work

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collaboratively and skillfully together and with the principal and district to this end.

Working with several members of the faculty of the College of Education at SJSU and with leaders from both Oak Grove and Campbell, we developed a curriculum and sequence of classes that we thought would help teachers become skillful teacher leaders and would be rigorous enough to meet the requirements of a master's program. In the fall of 1997, we began our first cohort with 40 teachers from the two districts. Since that time, we have graduated or currently enroll approximately 700 teachers from over 20 school districts. We named this program the Master's in Collaborative Leadership program (MACL).

In designing this program, our thinking was influenced by a book by Marilyn Katzenmeyer and Gayle Moller (1996) titled *Awakening the Sleeping Giant: Leadership Development for Teachers*. A book by Linda Lambert published in 1998 titled *Building Leadership Capacity in Schools* also influenced our thinking and curriculum design. While we loved both books, neither focused on the voices of teachers who are *awakening* and whose *capacity for leadership* are being built.

Our thinking was also influenced by the writing of Bonnie Benard (1991) on resiliency. The concept of resiliency speaks to the heart of our passion for the importance of schooling. We know that students learn best in schools where they are known well, where expectations are high and support is purposeful, and where student voices are valued. We also know that a school cannot foster resiliency for students if it does not do so for adults. This led me to write a book (1999) focused on seven schools in our region, including one in Oak Grove and one in Campbell, that I felt fostered resiliency for all students and adults. The construct of resiliency is at the heart of our work.

Four assumptions about leadership guide our thinking:

1. We define leadership in the broad sense of formal and informal leadership. In this sense, every person can be a leader.

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2. It is almost impossible to improve and sustain quality schools one at a time. Coherence with district leadership is vital if the focus on student learning is to be sustained over time.
3. Improving and sustaining public schooling as a vital institution is central to strengthening our democratic society.
4. School leadership is all about maximizing the learning of every student.

Students in MACL are doing incredibly courageous leadership work at their schools and districts. While in our program, they document the impact of their leadership on student learning through their action research projects (ARP). Their exit portfolios and class writings are testimonies rich in experiences and reflection. After graduation, they continue to collaborate as teams and as individuals in addressing the most complex and difficult issues, either as the new cadre of vice principals and principals or as teacher leaders at the level of the classroom, the school as a whole, and in many cases at the district level. We thought that their stories needed to be told in their own words.

We decided to write this book with the intent to capture their struggles, their victories, their challenges. We wanted this book *not* to be *about* teacher leaders, but one written by them. Our goal was to make sure that their voices would thread a narrative capturing this kind of new, skillful, collaborative teacher leader. That is why we focused on their personal stories, hoping that these would give the reader a sense not only of what this type of leadership means but also how it feels. The task was daunting. Over one year we met with many of our graduates. First, we organized a series of consultancies with large groups of our MACL graduates, asking for their input as to themes, issues, and style. Then from these consultancies we organized an editorial board made up of eight graduates who advised and guided us on the organization of the chapters, the

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selection of materials, and style uniformity. Finally, Joan Martens, one of these teacher leaders, edited the drafts of chapters. Yet at the end of the day, we know that this book's authenticity hinges on the reader's final word. We certainly hope to have accomplished what we set ourselves to do: to bring to the forefront the voices of new, refreshing types of educational leaders.

It is our hope that readers will use the specific narratives, Reflective Questions, and Resources presented in this book to focus discussions on how leadership capacity can be more fully developed in your schools. The *habits of mind* that the teacher leaders write about—use of data, focus on equity, job-embedded professional development, leading and managing change, courageous followership, advocacy, and so forth—can be at the heart of the work of school leaders in any school. The university-school partnership that we are engaged in helps emerging leaders develop these habits of mind, but any school or district dedicated to building leadership capacity can focus professional development around learning and practicing such habits of mind. We know that the nature of leadership changes in schools that focus in this way. We know that accountability for student learning is the dominating theme in such schools. We hope this book inspires you to pursue this work.

ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

In this book, teacher voices speak in the first person. We have included several dozen essays written by the graduates of our program. We made a conscious decision not to abridge the writing so that the reader can see the fullness of their deliberations. Their voices are clear, as they passionately reflect upon the impact they are having on the culture of their schools and on the learning of their students.

We are fans of Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe's (1998) *Understanding by Design* process. Therefore, we begin each chapter with Enduring Understandings, which are meant to be

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clear statements about our focus for that chapter, and end each chapter with Essential Questions that should help the reader reflect on the main points of that chapter. In between, we include Reflective Questions that we hope the reader will use to personalize the stories to your own work situation. Please use these questions to engage others in the conversation.

In Chapter 1, we argue that the nature of what it means to be a teacher changes in schools focused on building leadership capacity. We present teacher writing that explains how the nature of work becomes more focused. Furthermore, they write that the culture is more based on teacher voice, using evidence and quality job-embedded professional development. Teachers write about how the quality of life and learning improve when schools build leadership capacity. We close by introducing resiliency as a lens for reframing school culture.

In Chapter 2, we make the case that the principal-as-hero model will not lead to high student achievement that is sustainable over time and that *distributed leadership*, based on involving skillful teacher leaders, has a more powerful, long-term effect on student achievement. Teachers write about the skills, attitudes, and behaviors that they use in their schools. They write about how roles and relationships change and that teachers educate teachers, act as advocates, and use challenges to impact teacher and student learning.

In Chapter 3, we present the challenges, commitments, and struggles of teacher leaders engaged in closing the academic achievement gap. Our theory of action is that good teaching translates into maximizing learning for all students, which translates into teaching students to use their minds and hearts well. Teacher leaders tell how they have placed this principle at the center of their efforts. Equally important, they tell how they struggle to align resources with this focus in mind.

In Chapter 4, we argue that knowledge creation in schools is an important function of teachers. In order for that to happen though, we also propose some preconditions. One is the need for teachers to study their practices collaboratively. The model we propose here is *collaborative action research*. A second

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condition is that inquiry begins in the classroom but must be connected to the whole institution. Teacher leaders write about the human scale of cultural and systemic change in their schools and about change conceived for the long haul.

In Chapter 5, we propose the notion of *equity* as the guiding purpose of school leadership. Thus, equity must be conceived as a principle and a way of being. Teacher leaders narrate how they engage their colleagues, the administration, and their communities around achieving equitable outcomes. Everything begins with knowing all students well. Then they write about their function as agents who make principles and habits happen. Equally important, teacher leaders show the skills necessary to find out whether a school is achieving equity of opportunity and outcomes.

In Chapter 6, we demonstrate that students are most successful in school when school leaders serve as *advocates* and involve the school's staff, parents, and general community in the education of all children. Teachers write about advocating for special needs students and the whole child. They write about engaging parents as advocates for student learning and about advocating for beginning teachers, for quality professional development, and for equitable working conditions. We also present writing about a situation when teachers became involved politically in local school issues.

In Chapter 7, teachers write about how changing school culture in order to better maximize learning for all students necessitates leaders skilled in *leading and managing both change and transition*. Furthermore, they write about how courageous followership is required to improve the quality of learning in a school. Teachers write about lessons learned through their failures as well as their successes.

APPLYING THE CONCEPTS IN YOUR WORKPLACE

We recognize that most of you will not have a university-school partnership to support your work. At the end of each

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chapter, we include reflections on how you, as a school leader(s), could use that chapter to build leadership capacity at your work site. It is our sincere hope that leadership teams will use specific teacher narratives and Reflective and Essential Questions for collaborative reflection and build the leadership capacity at your workplace. Everything begins with knowing all students well. We know that students learn best in schools where leadership capacity is strong. Two quotes bring this home:

We need to create more opportunities for vigorous, substantive leadership, to more fully develop and capitalize on teachers' expertise without forcing them to leave the classroom. The combination of an administrator and a practicing teacher is a powerful one—able to bring both authority and classroom credibility together in the service of results. (Schmoker, 2001, p. 128)

Most educators are concerned with their legacies: We don't want to look over our shoulders at a school we left three years ago to find that the improvements we've helped introduce have been reversed or neglected. Luckily, it is possible to develop the leadership capacity in schools and districts so that improvements remain, adults keep learning, student performance continues to advance. Leadership capacity offers us the promise of sustainable school improvement by:

- Developing formal leaders as thoughtful, focused, and collaborative instructional leaders;
- Turning all adults within the school community—teachers, staff, parents, and community members—into reflective, skillful coleaders;
- Achieving steady and lasting improvement in student performance and development; and
- Constructing schools and districts that are sustainable learning organizations. (Lambert, 2003a, p. x)

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A WORD FROM THE AUTHORS

As we reviewed and discussed the writing of the teachers who contributed to this book, we recognized the diversity of their voices. We also recognized the different voices in our own writing styles. One of the beauties of this book, we hope, is that the reader will appreciate the wide range of voices presented. These voices originate from our multiple experiences, as we embrace our gender, linguistic, socioeconomic, professional, formal education and training, and geographical origins, but with profound warmth and respect.