



Foreword

As a new century looms on the horizon, the changing context of public education poses a multitude of challenges for school leaders. Nationwide, revenues are not keeping pace with demands on school district budgets. Over the next few years, one-third of the current teaching force will need to be replaced, and the supply of teachers in some subject areas is projected to fall short of the demand. Enrollments are expanding as the student population is becoming increasingly diverse. In the near future, the public schools will be composed largely of minorities and a rising number of students who come from limited-English-speaking, poverty, single-parent, and transitional households.

School leaders, especially principals, will play a major role in determining how effectively public schools are able to respond to these challenges. The editors of *School Leadership: Handbook for Excellence* have anticipated this need and provided a valuable resource for those who are interested in preparing themselves to meet the challenges that lie ahead.

The essence of leadership is achieving results through people. Understandably, this book emphasizes these two aspects of leadership and provides the reader with informative and insightful treatments of a broad array of issues related to this important topic. If a leader is to accomplish results through others, he or she must be able to select teachers who can stand and deliver; to adopt leadership strategies and practices that capitalize on the talents and skills the new teachers bring to their roles; to promote a vision of excellence that is shared by all members of the school community; and to involve teachers in the creation of a sound instructional program.

Leaders must also be able to create organizational conditions under which people are motivated to do their best; to mobilize the resources and the support that they need in order to perform; and to make constructive use of the conflict that inevitably arises when people work together. These interrelated issues of school leadership are the very ones that the editors of this book have elected to underscore.

When discussing these and other issues, the authors provide a balanced perspective. They do not attempt to sell you on a particular way of thinking about an issue. Rather, the authors present the alternatives and the theory, research, and practical wisdom that speak to the soundness of these various options. They also recognize that there is a creative side of leadership where the leaders must assess the situation that they face and decide how to act in light of what they know about the particular situation and the relevant theory, research, and practical wisdom. There are no recipes to be found in this book, and rightfully so given the complexities inherent in being a school leader.

This book is also highly readable. Both the editors and the authors have striven to provide numerous examples of what a theory or a concept looks like in actual practice and to offer suggestions for translating theory and research into practice. Although I was familiar with much of the literature that formed the basis for the discussion of the various leadership issues that they treated, I found that their syntheses surfaced new questions and new insights.

For school leaders or aspiring leaders who desire to reach the fullest potential in their positions, I am confident that this book will be a valued resource, one to which they will turn and return as they confront the timely and timeless issues that this book addresses.

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