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From Leading to Succeeding: The Seven Elements of Effective

Leadership in Education

By Douglas Reeves

Study Guide

This study guide is a companion to the book *From Leading to Succeeding: The Seven Elements of Effective Leadership in Education* by Douglas Reeves. *From Leading to Succeeding* identifies the skills and qualities that leaders in education must have in order to surmount the trials their schools will face.

This guide is arranged by chapter, enabling readers to either work their way through the entire book or focus on the specific topics addressed in a particular chapter. It can be used by individuals, small groups, or an entire team to identify key points, raise questions for consideration, assess conditions in a particular school or district, and suggest steps that might be taken to promote a healthy school culture.

We thank you for your interest in this book, and we hope this guide is a useful tool in your efforts to create a healthy culture in your school or district.

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Guide

Chapter 1

Purpose

1. What two fatal flaws do mission and vision statements often have when they result from traditional methods of declaring an organization's purpose?
2. Answer the following questions in regard to your school: "What do we aspire to be and to do?" "Why are we here, and what makes us come to school every day?" "What are we *passionate* about?" How do your school mission and vision statements address—or fail to address—these questions?
3. In your own words, define *strategy* based on the definitions of this term found in this chapter. Based on your definition, consider whether your school's mission and vision statements are strategic.
4. Consider the examples of top mission statements listed in this chapter on page 15. Find another leading brief, clear mission statement that you would add to this list. How do the brevity and clarity of these mission statements compare with the sample mission statement provided on page 16?

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5. How would you rephrase your school’s mission and vision statements so that they clearly and effectively state what your organization does and what it aspires to do?

6. What four common perceptions that students have about their schools and their schools’ leadership does the High School Study of Student Engagement 2009 survey reveal?

7. According to Michael Porter, what is the essence of strategy? Take a look at the “Therefore, we will *not* ...” statements provided on page 22. After considering one of your meeting’s top priorities, add an explicit statement beginning with “Therefore, we will not” to one of the priorities.

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Chapter 2

Trust

1. What are some drivers that may obstruct whole-system reform?
2. In your opinion, what must system leaders do in order to effectively commit to caring about the lives of individual staff members and students? What actions speak louder than words in building these relationships?
3. What bland mistakes should teachers not mention as their professional weaknesses during job interviews? Why are these not appropriate responses? Provide an example of a serious error you've made that you could more appropriately provide if you were being interviewed for a job.
4. Why is getting conflict out into the open a necessary leadership task? Describe a professional situation in which you experienced a conflict being productively handled.
5. According to Thomas Hoerr, what does authority come from? With this understanding of authority in mind, think of someone you know who demonstrates authority. How does this person's authority show itself?

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6. In order to build professional trust, what must teachers and leaders give to one another, and how should they start each day working with each other?

7. In what three ways can leaders build trust? Describe a situation in which you took these actions. What was the result?

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Chapter 3

Focus

1. Define *calendar integrity*. As the author suggests, keep a detailed record of how you spend your time for one workweek; you may consider using an app for this task. When the week comes to an end, analyze your results. How do your top work priorities compare with how you actually spend your time?
2. In what ways are focused leaders and fragmented leaders different?
3. In your own words, define *deliberative practice*.
4. Consider figure 3.3, “Using the Implementation Audit.” What are the qualities of leadership actions or initiatives that fit into each of the audit’s four quadrants? Which quadrant poses the greatest challenge to education leaders, and why is this the case?
5. Give an example of a program at your school that fits into the Weed quadrant of the implementation audit. Why has this program outlasted its usefulness?

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6. Why do people commonly resist quantification in leadership and teaching? What are some easily quantifiable standards by which to assess leadership improvement throughout the school year? Also, provide your own example of an easily quantifiable standard.

7. Briefly describe each of the five hallmarks of good homework. Evaluate one of the homework assignments you give to students based on these hallmarks. What are your results?

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Chapter 4

Leverage

1. What question should leadership ask, and what question should leadership not ask, when deciding which initiatives to implement? How are these two questions significantly different?
2. Describe the key to measuring leadership leverage.
3. What does it mean for feedback to be FAST, and in which of these areas do you think your feedback strategies require the most work? Why is FAST feedback strongly associated with improved student achievement?
4. How do people often start public meetings in Australia? Why does the author believe this practice is a good model for public ceremonies in the United States and around the world to also follow?
5. What six observations does Jenny Lewis offer for dealing with the demands of 21st century education? Which of these approaches do you think you and your school do best, and in which area do you believe you need the most work?

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6. Consider the list of actions that have low impact or counterproductive impact on student achievement. Which of these are present in your school and should be thrown out?

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Chapter 5

Feedback

1. When assessing teachers' effectiveness, what primary indicator of effectiveness should administrators look for?
2. What do ineffective evaluations tell teachers? What qualities must feedback have for it to effectively impact student performance?
3. What three variables should schools seek to cultivate at high levels in order to improve achievement? Define what each of these variables involves.
4. As this chapter suggests, draw two columns on a piece of paper; at the top of the first column, write "Things we cannot control," and for the second column, write "Things we can control," and write down things you find applicable for each column. How can you interpret your results?
5. What are the two fundamental rules about rubrics?
6. Describe what it means for feedback to be exemplary, proficient, or progressing or for it to not be meeting standards.

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Chapter 6

Change

1. Take a look at figure 6.1, “Costs and Benefits of Change.” What are the levels of costs and benefits of the changes that fit into each of these quadrants?
2. Do your school’s group deliberations start in the manner Stephen Covey describes—“Seek first to understand, then to be understood”—or in a different manner? How could your deliberations’ structure improve?
3. Reflect on three changes you have made in your life over the past five years, such as professional or personal changes. Write them into figure 6.3, “Personal Change Readiness Assessment.” To what degree were you ready for change in each of these cases?
4. Consider the common claims about change leadership listed on page 89. How might you challenge each of these claims?
5. How can *strategic planning* and *strategic planners* have different impacts on making changes in an organization? Why must organizations separate these concepts?

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6. As the author suggests, try to craft a vision statement without words. What are your results?

7. What are the two rules of buy-in?

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Chapter 7

Sustainability

1. What do Andy Hargreaves, Alan Boyle, and Alma Harris consider the key challenge to sustainability?
2. According to Michael Fullan, what are the eight elements of sustainability?
3. In your own words, define *anti-systems thinking*. Describe an example of anti-systems thinking being rewarded by current evaluation systems.
4. In order for leaders to establish practices that will have both instant and long-lasting positive effects on their organizations, what three actions must they first take?
5. How does your school give out praise to staff members? How could you improve upon your methods of praising school personnel outside of their scheduled evaluations?
6. Take a few moments to write a letter to your successors, expressing your aspirations, your fears, and your dreams. What do you learn about yourself and your aims through writing this letter, and how may your future successors benefit from reading this letter?