Exceptional Teachers Teaching Exceptional Children

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Special Education Legal Alert

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This month's update identifies two recent court decisions that respectively address attorneys' fees for parents and FAPE disputes for students with dyslexia. For various related articles, special supplements, and earlier monthly updates, see **perryzirkel.com**.

In *A.B. v. Brownsburg Community School Corporation,* an unofficially published decision on February 2, 2022, a federal district court in Indiana addressed the attorneys' fees request of the parents of a child with diagnoses of ADHD, generalized anxiety disorder, and depression. In 2017–18 and 2018–19, after a Section 504 evaluation, the school provided the child with a 504 plan. Early in 2019–20, the school suspended him, subject to further proceedings, after finding an unspent shotgun shell in his locker along with a crude device that appeared capable of discharging the shotgun shell. The school promptly scheduled a manifestation determination conference. The next day, the parents filed for due process, contending that the school should have previously evaluated him for IDEA eligibility. At the scheduled conference a few days later, the team determined that the incident was not a manifestation of his disability, whereupon the school district expelled him for the rest of the year. As a result of immediate settlement discussions, the district conducted an IDEA evaluation, determined that he was not eligible under the IDEA, provided additional 504 plan accommodations, and agreed to reduce the expulsion to the fall semester. After further settlement discussions during the spring semester, the district agreed to provide him with an independent educational evaluation (IEE). Upon the hearing officer's scheduling of the impartial hearing for July 2020, after delays attributable in part to the pandemic, the district drafted a settlement agreement that provided for the rest of the parents' requested relief, including IDEA eligibility, and $10,000 of their attorneys' fees. In response to the

proposed agreement and further motions from both sides that included further demands from the parents, the hearing officer issued a dismissal order that (a) the student was eligible as ED and OHI, (b) the IEP team shall meet within two weeks to develop an IEP, (c) the district will pay for one of the parents' experts to attend the meeting, and (d) the student shall receive IEP services by the start of the school year. However, after further back-and-forth acrimony, the parents' filed a motion in federal court for district payment of their attorneys' fees, amounting to $64K.

In response to the parents' motion, the district argued that the parents did not qualify as "prevailing"	The IDEA provides that a court, in its discretion, may award reasonable attorneys' fees to the parents if they are the "prevailing party."
The applicable requirement for "prevailing" status is for the party to achieve a material alteration in the legal relationship of the parties in the form of an enforceable judgment or court-ordered consent decree.	The court denied the parents' motion, concluding that the hearing officer's order "did not require that the District do anything it had not already agreed to do." Although recognizing that the applicable standard was debatable, the court reserved such policy arguments for Congress or the appellate court.

This case illustrates the transaction costs of the legalization of special education. The trade-off for providing enforceable legal standards for correcting the historic inequities for students with disabilities is the adversarial process that puts attorney representation in a leading position and that makes the formulation and application of "prevailing" status for plaintiff parents as high a priority as is FAPE. In this case, the determination of this status is much closer than the district court found it to be, thus possibly going to appeal.

On March 30, 2022 in *C.M. v. Rutherford County Schools*, a federal district court in Tennessee addressed the FAPE issues for a student with dyslexia. In grades 4–6, the student had an IEP based on specific learning disabilities (SLD) that included the Wilson reading program. However, upon entering middle school in grade 7, the IEP team decided to provide him with a different reading program, "Using Language!," as well as reduced goals and accommodations. At the midpoint of the second semester of grade 7, the district conducted the triennial evaluation, determining that he was no longer eligible under the IDEA. Instead, the district provided him with a 504 plan. The parents filed for a due process hearing, requesting an IEP with Wilson services and an IEE. The district agreed to pay for the IEE, which concluded that his low average scores in reading qualified for IDEA eligibility as SLD. After a four-day hearing, the hearing officer upheld the IEP for grade 7 and the triennial evaluation toward the end of that year. The parents filed an appeal in the district court.

The parents claimed that the district's choice of Using Language amounted to predetermination, as the Sixth Circuit had decided for a child with autism in *Deal v. Hamilton County Board of Education* (2004).	Although finding some parallels with Deal, the court concluded that the following distinctions disproved predetermination: (a) the IEP team's choice and the parents' preferred program were comparable; (b) the middle school offered several reading programs; and (c) the parents actively participated in the IEP meeting with assistance of a dyslexia advocate.
The parents also claimed that the reduction of the previous IEP's goals and accommodations in the grade 7 IEP amounted to predetermination.	Distinguishing preparation from predetermination, the court concluded that the parents' active participation in the IEP meeting, resulting in various revisions to the district's draft, showed that the district did not take an unwavering position.

The parents' next claim was that the district's failure, despite their repeated requests, to provide the reading testing data before the IEP meeting was a prejudicial procedural FAPE violation.	The court agreed that this failure was a procedural violation but concluded that the parents failed to preponderantly prove that it resulted in the requisite harm to either the student or, more fitting here, the parents' opportunity for meaningful participation in the IEP process.
The parents' final major claim was that the grade 7 IEP did not meet the substantive standard for FAPE under *Endrew F*.	Characterizing the IEP as resulting in "a veritable salmagundi of outcomes ranging from inspiring progress to unfortunate setbacks," the court postponed a ruling on this issue, ordering the parties first to engage in mediation.

This case was a close one, as the court acknowledged and as the federal magistrate's different recommended ruling illustrated. Nevertheless, it serves as a reminder of the procedural FAPE issues that sometimes overlap with methodology disputes and the "high bar" for predetermination claims in the years since the *Deal* decision. Finally, it leaves one wondering about the common but questionable practice of providing a 504 plan as, in effect, a consolation prize. More specifically, in this case, if the basis of the 504 plan presumably was a substantial impairment in the major life activity of reading as compared to most students in the general population, (a) is not this child entitled to specially designed instruction in reading in his 504 plan; and, in any event, (b) why does he not qualify as needing special education as SLD in one or more of the enumerated areas of reading under the IDEA?

Buzz from the Hub

All articles below can be accessed through the following links:

https://www.parentcenterhub.org/buzz-april2022-issue1/

https://www.parentcenterhub.org/buzz-march2022-issue1/

https://www.parentcenterhub.org/buzz-feb2022-issue2/

https://www.parentcenterhub.org/buzz-feb2022-issue1/

https://www.parentcenterhub.org/buzz-jan2022-issue2/

Advancing Equity and Support for Underserved Communities

In keeping with President Biden's Executive Order, signed on his first day in office, federal agencies have now issued Equity Action Plans for addressing equity issues in their individual agency scope and mission. These plans are quite relevant to family-led and family-serving organizations, especially plans from the Departments of Education, Justice, and Health and Human Services.

Fast Facts: Students with disabilities who are English learners (ELs) served under IDEA Part B

OSEP's *Fast Facts* series summarizes key facts related to specific aspects of the data collection authorized by IDEA. This newest *Fast Facts* gives you data details about students with disabilities who are also English learners. (Want to see what **other** *Fast Facts* are available?)

Asian Americans with Disabilities Resource Guide

The *Asian Americans With Disabilities Resource Guide* was designed for Asian American youth with disabilities, allies, and the disability community in mind, in response to the significant

information gap about Asian Americans with disabilities. Chapters include Advocacy 101, Accessibility, Culture, Allyship, and Resources.

Strategies for Partnering on Culturally Safe Research with Native American Communities

To identify strategies for promoting cultural safety, accountability, and sustainability in research with Native American communities, Child Trends assessed peer-reviewed and grey literature (e.g., policy documents and guidelines). Findings? To rebuild trust and improve health outcomes, research collaborations with Native American communities must be community-based or community-engaged, culturally appropriate, and recognize tribal sovereignty in the collection and use of data.

Understanding Screening

This toolkit helps educators and parents learn about screening and how screening can help determine which students may be at risk for reading difficulties, including dyslexia. From the National Center on Improving Literacy.

Inside an Evaluation for Learning Disorders

*(Also available in Spanish: **Un vistazo a una evaluación para los trastornos del aprendizaje**)*

If a child is struggling in school, the first step to getting help is an evaluation. A learning evaluation can give parents and the child's teachers valuable information about the child's strengths and weaknesses. It can also reveal what kind of support would be helpful. A full evaluation is necessary for a child to be diagnosed with a learning disorder. To help parents understand the process, the Child Mind Institute and Understood.org teamed up to create this 20-minute video that walks us through the evaluation process.

Education Data 101

*(Also available in Spanish: **Datos educacionales: Nociones básicas**)*

This FAQ on data shares resources you need to understand why education data is a critical tool for supporting individuals, families, educators, and communities. From the Data Quality Campaign.

Parents Are Getting Access to Student Data, But How Can We Support Them to Use It?

With the right supports, parents can be savvy data consumers who actively engage with their students' data. In many places around the country, school leaders are already taking creative measures to bridge this gap between simple communication and engagement. This article highlights examples.

Sharing Info about State Assessments with Families of Children with Disabilities

(Also available in Spanish)

In February, CPIR teamed with NCEO to spotlight NCEO's amazing new resource, the *Participation Communications Toolkit*. The highly customizable toolkit is designed for stakeholders to use in discussing and making decisions about how children with disabilities will participate in state assessments.

Q&A on Serving Children with Disabilities Placed by Their Parents in Private Schools

(Also available in Spanish)

This OSEP webinar for Parent Centers answers questions about states' obligations to provide equitable services (versus FAPE) to children with disabilities who are placed in private schools by their parents. Simultaneous Spanish interpretation was also provided. Find the 2 YouTube videos, a PDF of the presentation slides, the guidance document, and more at the link above.

The Importance of Community in Indigenous Peoples' Healing

In this March 2022 blog post, the National Alliance for Mental Illness (NAMI) reflects on the power of community in Native American life, saying "Being an active part of a community that allows us to feel seen is truly an invaluable feeling. When we feel seen and connected as humans, our healing expands."

The Incredible Power of Purpose

*(Also available in Spanish: **Cómo ayudar a un nino a encontrar su propósito**)*

Having a clear sense of purpose in life has unlimited benefits for a child. This Great Schools resource includes a worksheet/activity designed to help teens explore and define their unique purpose in life.

Mental Wellness in the Black Community

From the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), Sharing Hope is a 3-part video series that explores the journey of mental wellness in Black communities through dialogue, storytelling, and guided discussions.

Compartiendo Esperanza: Mental Wellness in the Latinx Community

Also from NAMI comes *Compartiendo Esperanza*. It, too, is a 3-part video series, this one focusing on mental wellness in Hispanic/Latino communities, through dialogue, storytelling, and guided discussions

Native Hope: Reflecting on Our Foundations

Understanding Native American culture is critical when conducting outreach to tribes, communities, and Native families with children who have disabilities. **Native Hope** is a resource that helps Native communities meet their needs. It also offers candid and poignant articles on its website that can enrich Parent Center understanding of Native American history, culture, and values, both historically and in the present.

Sharing Info about State Assessments with Families

(Also available in Spanish) Riches, indeed, are shared in this Febrary 11th CPIR webinar, which focuses on NCEO's new (and quite amazing!) resource, the *Participation Communications Toolkit*. You'll love the toolkit; it's designed for stakeholders of all stripes to use in discussing and making decisions about how children with disabilities will participate in state assessments. The webinar highlights the role that Parent Centers in particular can play in supporting the family's role as one of the primary decision makers about their child's participation.

Return to School | Child Find and Early Intervention Services

(Also available in Spanish) This February 2nd webinar features presenters from OSEP as they elaborate on two of OSEP's recent *Return to School Roadmaps*, both focused on Part C: (1) Child Find, Referral, and Eligibility; and (2) Provision of Early Intervention Services. Both roadmaps are also available in Spanish, as is this webinar.

Introduction to the Vocational Rehabilitation Program

(Also available in Spanish) Want to learn more about the services available from the vocational rehabilitation system for people with disabilities? Check out this January 24th webinar from the RAISE Center. It covers eligibility, developing the Individualized Plan for Employment, available services, and financial factors to consider. Links to the captioned English and Spanish versions are given at the bottom of the page linked above.

Honoring Black History Month: Unsung Heroes of the Disability Rights Movement

The month of February is dedicated to honoring the long history of Black Americans and their many contributions to society. In this article, NCLD (National Center for Learning Disabilities) highlights the stories of Black heroes whose vision, commitment, and activism helped advance progress for people with disabilities.

Plain Language Made It Easy

(Also available in Spanish) | The RAISE Center and PEATC (Virginia's PTI) collaborated to develop this resource guide and video in English and Spanish to assist people in making their documents accessible to everyone.

Federal Funding Support Specifics

In March 2021, the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act was signed into law. It included $122 billion for states and school districts to help safely reopen and operate schools and address the impact of the pandemic on students. Want to know more about ARP funding for your state? How about what your state proposed to do with those funds? Find out at the link above, posted by the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education at the U.S. Department of Education.

The Department's January 2022 press release on the approval of all state plans and the distribution of funds to states highlights what SEAs and school districts are doing to address the urgent needs of their schools with ventilation improvements, staff hiring and retention, mental health services, high-dosage tutoring programs, after-school and summer learning partnerships, and more.

Support for COVID-19 Screening Testing in Schools

Heard of the ELC at the CDC? In April 2021, it awarded $10 billion from the ARP on behalf of

CDC to 62 recipients to support COVID-19 screening testing and other mitigation activities in K–12 schools for teachers, staff, and students. Use the USA map to find out about the screening programs and plans in your state. Funding is available through July 31, 2022.

Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE) Toolkit

This toolkit is a resource for educational and vocational rehabilitation agencies in improving post-school employment outcomes for students with disabilities. It's meant to facilitate the collaboration necessary to implement secondary transition services across agencies at the state, community, and student levels and increase the use of evidence-based practices (EBPs). From NTACT, the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition.

Pros and Cons of Disclosing a Disability to Employers

*(Also available in Spanish: **Ventajas y desventajas de revelar a los empleadores que tiene una discapacidad**)*

Starting a new job can make teens and young adults feel excited, independent, and maybe nervous. They're expected to learn new skills and routines, interact with new people, and make decisions. One of the biggest decisions is whether to tell their employer about any learning and thinking differences.

Department of Education Releases Equity Action Plan as Part of Biden-Harris Administration's Efforts to Advance Racial Equity and Support Underserved Communities

The U.S. Department of Education released its inaugural equity action plan as part of the Biden-Harris Administration's continued commitment to advancing racial equity and support for underserved communities through the federal government. This plan aligns with President Biden's executive order,Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government.

As the Department works to help schools, communities, students, educators, and families recover from the pandemic and rebuild stronger than before March 2020, advancing equity and closing gaps made worse by the pandemic remain a core priority. U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona underscored this priority earlier this year when he laid out his vision for education in America. The Department's equity action plan builds on current processes already in place and implements new strategies to ensure the advancement of equity as it works to promote student achievement and ensure the nation's education system meets the demands of today's global economy.

"Education has the power to bring the American Dream within reach of every individual, lift communities, draw people together, drive our economy, and meet our nation's vast potential," said U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona. "We need to keep the focus on transforming our education system so it trulyexpands opportunity for all students, no matter their race, background, zip code, age, or family's income.Together, we must take bold action to ensure our nation's schools are defined not by disparities, but by equity and excellence, especially as we recover from the pandemic and reemerge stronger than before."

To deal with both ongoing recovery efforts from the pandemic and begin to remedy long-standing disparities that underserved students and communities face in achieving equal education opportunities, the Department is announcing a series of plans to incorporate equity throughout its

operations and mission to meet the needs of every learner. These additional efforts by the Department include:

- **Prioritizing access to and completion of an education beyond high school.** Postsecondary attainment continues to be inequitably available for traditionally underserved populations as accessibility, affordability, and equitable funding across institutions remain barriers to earning a postsecondary degree or certificate. To improve access and affordability, the Department will review and improve its model used to verify financial aid applicants. The Department also intends to undertake a comprehensive approach to provide for equitable funding by: investing in Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities,and minority-serving institutions such as Hispanic-Serving Institutions, Predominantly Black Institutions, and Asian American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions, community colleges, and other under-resourced public institutions; supporting institutions, systems, and states to raise completion rates for underserved students; and sponsoring a new vision of college excellence that makes inclusivity a marker of prestige.

- **Ensuring equitable impact of American Rescue Plan's $130 billion in funding for K-12 students.** Certain student groups have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, including but not limited to students from low-income backgrounds, students with disabilities, multilingual learners, students experiencing homelessness, and migratory students. The Department is committed to the American Rescue Plan's (ARP) intended purpose of helping schools and communities recover from the pandemic. The Department will also continue to support State Educational Agencies (SEA) and Local Educational Entities (LEA) in meeting and enforcing the requirements of the ARPElementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund's first of its kind Maintenance of Equity requirement, which ensures that SEAs and LEAs do not disproportionately reduce per-pupil funding to districts and schools and that SEAs do not cut funding at all for the highest poverty districts.

- **Investing in resources to help advance civil rights.** Advancing equity rests on the presumption of equal opportunities and protection under the law. The Department's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) made the historic decision to collect data from the 2020-21

and 2021-22 school years, marking the first time OCR has conducted civil rights data collection from all public schools two school years in a row instead of every other year. The additional collection will allow the Department to identify inequities in educational opportunities as the country continues to grapple with the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on students' academic, social, and emotional development.

- **Advancing equity in contracting and procurement.** Minority owned small businesses receive about 20 percent of total agency procurement actions, but they receive significantly fewer overall dollars. In response, the Department is identifying opportunities to award higher dollar actions to minority owned small businesses, consistent with the authorizing statute and regulations governing minority owned small business contract awards. Additionally, the Department will work with its Senior Executive Service (SES) to ensure executive performance plans address progress towards our achievement of the small business contracting goals.

- **Advancing equity in grant process strategies.** The Department pursues its mission by funding programs that will improve access to high-quality educational opportunities and programs that pursue innovations in teaching and learning with a focus on underserved students. Each year the Department convenes panels of external education professionals and practitioners to serve as peer reviewers. To advance equity in the grants process, the Department will expand its outreach efforts to attract the broadest possible pool of reviewers.

These actions build on work the Department has initiated throughout the first year of the Biden-Harris Administration to deliver on equity and racial justice. Some components already put forth by the Department include:

- **Supporting America's education system through the COVID-19 pandemic.** The Department distributed unprecedented resources to states, districts, K-12 schools, and postsecondary institutions, including funding, guidance, and technical assistance to help educators meet the needs of all students, especially those disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.

- **Supporting Schools with High-Poverty Rates to Address Opportunity and Achievement Gaps.** Title I helps schools provide students in low-income communities

the learning opportunities and supports they need to succeed, and addresses long-standing funding disparities between under-resourced schools – which disproportionately serve students of color – and their wealthier counterparts. The Department continues to administer these funds that serve 25 million students in nearly 90 percent of school districts across the nation. President Biden's FY23 budget proposal calls for $36.5 billion for Title I, more than doubling the program's funding compared to the 2021 enacted level. Within the requested Title I funding, it would provide resources for SEAs to voluntarily establish commissions to identify and create plans to address inequities in their education funding systems and gaps in access to educational opportunity, and funding for similar reviews at the district level.

- **Investing in Educator Recruitment and Retention.** As states, districts, and schools are working hard to address the impact of COVID-19 on students' social, emotional, mental health, and academic needs, many of them are facing significant challenges in attracting and retaining teachers. Research shows that existing educator shortages disproportionately impact students of color, students from low-income backgrounds, students with disabilities, and, often, rural communities. The Department continues to take action to support and invest in the teaching profession and address the teacher shortage many schools and districts across the country face.

- **Supporting higher education with pandemic relief funding.** The Department distributed $40 billion through the American Rescue Plan to more than 5,000 colleges and universities to help students access a high-quality education and the academic, emotional, and financial supports needed to thrive and safely return to on-campus, in-person instruction and activities. ARP provided more than $16 billion to our nation's HBCUs, Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities and minority-serving institutions.

- **Advancing equity through Title IX.** The Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights launched a comprehensive review of its existing regulations and other actions related to Title IX, which prohibits sex discrimination in education programs and activities that receive federal funding.

- **Supporting learners with disabilities.** The Department invested more than $3 billion in ARP funds to support children with disabilities who were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic and its disruptions to in-person learning.

- **Supporting student loan borrowers.** The Department has redoubled its efforts to support student loan borrowers, many of whom have struggled with unemployment, reduced work hours, and other financial stressors brought on by the pandemic. The Department's initial efforts to provide targeted loan relief have already led to the approval of $17 billion in student loan cancellation for more than 700,000 borrowers, including $1.5 billion to borrowers who have been taken advantage of by their institutions, $7.8 billion for over 400,000 borrowers who have a total and permanent disability, and $1.26 billion to over 100,000 borrowers who attended the now-defunct ITT Technical Institute. In October 2021, the Department also revamped the Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) program, which allows borrowers to study for and work in jobs that may be lower-paying without being overly burdened by student loan debt, announcing changes to the program to allow borrowers to receive credit for past periods of repayment on loans that may not otherwise qualify for PSLF.

- **Focusing on equity as a priority of the administration.** The Secretary's Supplemental Priorities, which became effective on January 10, 2022, contain six priorities of the administration, with the second priority focusing on Promoting Equity in Student Access to Educational Resources and Opportunities. The priority enables program offices within the Department to focus strategic plans, competitions and projects in ways that promote educational equity and adequacy in resources and opportunity for underserved students.

Education Department Continues Push to Invest in Highly Effective Educators and Address Teacher Shortage

The U.S. Department of Education is continuing to take action to support and invest in the teaching profession and address the teacher shortage many schools and districts across the country face. The Supporting Effective Educator Development (SEED) grant program is now accepting applications for efforts that increase the pipeline of highly effective educators.

The SEED program will award $65 million to support the implementation of evidence-based practices that prepare, develop, or enhance the skills of educators. These grants also will enable recipients to develop, expand, and evaluate practices that can serve as models that can be sustained, replicated, and scaled. This program is part of the Biden-Harris Administration's broader commitment to supporting targeted efforts that will provide comprehensive, high-quality pathways into the profession, such as residency and Grow Your Own programs, and evidence-based professional development all focused on building and supporting a more diverse educator pipeline and combating the teacher shortage nationally.

"We know that in order to improve education across the country and meet our students where they are, we must invest in teacher professional learning, recruitment, and retention. This past year, we heard from our educators, parents, and leaders that investing in teachers is investing in students. We are ready to act on that!" said Secretary Cardona. "This grant competition will support institutions of higher education, national nonprofits, and other eligible partners that provide teachers and school leaders with effective strategies for building inclusive, unbiased, and safe learning environments that support the academic, social, and emotional needs of every student. Building an education system that is the best in the world requires an investment in our dedicated teachers."

As states, districts, and schools are working hard to address the impact of COVID-19 on students' social, emotional, mental health, and academic needs, many of them are facing significant challenges in attracting and retaining teachers. Preexisting teacher shortages in critical areas such as special education; multilingual education; science, technology, engineering, and

math (STEM); career and technical education; and early childhood education have only been further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic—directly impeding student access to educational opportunity.

The SEED program fosters the use of rigorous evidence-based practices in selecting and implementing strategies and interventions that support educators' development across the continuum of their careers. Support for educator preparation programs and high-quality professional development are vital to ensure that all students have access to well-prepared and qualified teachers, principals, and other school leaders. These programs invest in educators who are effective and likely to stay in the profession. Research shows that existing educator shortages disproportionately impact students of color, students from low-income backgrounds, students with disabilities, and, often, rural communities.

Coinciding with today's announcement, this afternoon the Department is hosting a webinar focused on "Strengthening Partnerships Between States, School Districts, and Higher Education to Increase the Number of Teacher Candidates Prepared to Enter the Classroom and Provide Immediate Support to Schools."

During the webinar, Education Department representatives will discuss Secretary Cardona's recent call to action for states, institutions of higher education, and school districts to commit to using American Rescue Plan and other federal relief funds to help address teacher shortages. Representatives also will share how federal relief funds and opportunities through the U.S. Department of Labor can and are being used to address teacher shortages and provide support to schools by establishing or scaling up teaching residency and apprenticeship programs.

U.S. Education Secretary Miguel Cardona Calls on States, Districts, Higher Ed Institutions to Address Nationwide Teacher Shortage and Bolster Student Recovery with American Rescue Plan Funds

U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona will issue a nationwide call to action for states, higher education leaders, and schools to tap federal resources and work together to address the teacher shortage and aid student recovery. Today's announcement builds on President Biden's call in the State of the Union encouraging leaders to use American Rescue Plan funds to address this critical challenge schools and districts across the country are facing. The call to action coincides with Secretary Cardona's participation in the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching's Summit on Improvement in Education in San Diego.

"I have always known that a well-prepared, well-supported, well-compensated, and diverse educator workforce is the foundation for student success. Educator vacancies and other staff shortages represent a real challenge as our schools work to recover, falling hardest on students of color, students in rural communities, students from low-income backgrounds, students with disabilities, and multilingual learners. That's why I'm proud that the American Rescue Plan has equipped states, school districts, and colleges and universities that prepare our educators with unprecedented financial resources to help overcome this challenge," said Secretary Cardona. "Today, I am calling on states, districts, and institutions of higher education to use ARP funds to address the teacher shortage and increase the number of teacher candidates prepared to enter the teaching profession. My team will continue to advise state and local leaders on how they can seize this moment; put COVID relief dollars to work in our schools; and achieve a lasting, equitable recovery for our students."

To coincide with the Secretary's call to action, the Department released a fact sheet providing concrete examples of how states, districts, and schools are already taking up the call to use federal COVID dollars to strengthen the teacher pipeline, get more educators in the classroom, and accelerate student recovery. Districts and higher education institutions are partnering to create and expand residency programs, offer paraprofessional internships, get college students in

the classroom more quickly, and more. Because of these partnerships, students across the country can spend more time working with qualified educators and addressing the academic impact of COVID-19.

Secretary Cardona, a former teacher himself, is calling on school and state leaders to work together to level-up the teacher pipeline and get more qualified adults in the classroom immediately across the country. In order to accelerate student recovery, he is urging states and schools to use funds provided by the American Rescue Plan and other federal COVID-19 relief funds to scale up educator preparation programs (EPPs) at institutions of higher education and look for dynamic and innovative ways to provide hands-on learning for prospective teachers or paraprofessionals in a classroom environment.

In his speech, Secretary Cardona will issue a call to action with clear deliverables for states, districts, and institutions of higher education. Using Higher Education Emergency Relief Funds (HEERF), Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER), and Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds these groups can create bold and innovative paths to the teaching profession.

To increase the number of teacher candidates prepared to enter the profession in the fall and beyond, Secretary Cardona is calling on **states** to commit to:

- **Establish teaching as a Registered Apprenticeship.** The U.S. Department of Labor has approved standards that create an easy pathway for states to establish and use apprenticeship funding to support teaching residencies, allowing teacher apprentices to earn a good wage while learning the skills – on-the-job and through higher education partners and their integrated coursework – necessary to provide a quality education to our nation's students. Registered Apprenticeship is an effective "earn and learn" model with a long history of establishing career pathways in various industries by providing structured, paid on-the-job learning experiences combined with job-related technical instruction with a mentor that leads to a nationally recognized credential. To learn more about Registered Apprenticeships, visit apprenticeship.gov.

- **Invest in evidence-based teacher residency programs.** States can provide grant funding to increase the number of partnerships between and districts that support teaching residencies.
- **Establish or expand loan forgiveness or service scholarship programs.** These programs can also include a commitment to teach in a high-need area for a minimum number of years.
- **Increase teacher compensation.** Provide a competitive and livable wage, including increasing starting salaries and salary caps for teachers.

To increase the number of teacher candidates prepared to enter the profession in the fall and beyond, Secretary Cardona is calling on **districts** to commit to:

- **Increase the number of partnerships between EPPs and districts that support teaching residencies and schools.** Teacher residents, as part of their clinical experience, can serve in schools as substitutes, paraprofessionals, or tutors as their academic schedules allow and as they complete requirements for teacher certification.
- **Increase the availability of qualified teacher residents to support educators, students, and staff.** Districts can partner with institutions of higher education to provide additional supports to educators and students through the use of teaching candidates.

To increase the number of teacher candidates prepared to enter the profession in the fall and beyond, Secretary Cardona is calling on **institutions of higher education and EPPs** to commit to:

- **Increase the number of teaching residency programs and program capacity.** Teacher residents, as part of their clinical experiences, can serve in schools as substitute teachers, paraprofessionals, or tutors as their academic schedules allow and as they complete requirements for teacher certification. An institution could use its HEERF institutional funds to expand its teacher training programs in response to the pandemic through such measures as hiring additional faculty and staff; providing stipends, scholarships, or other students aid; and creating additional course offerings.

- **Work with states to establish teaching as a Registered Apprenticeship.** The U.S. Department of Labor has approved standards that create an easy pathway for states to establish and use apprenticeship funding to support teaching residencies. As previously described, Registered Apprenticeship is an effective "earn and learn" model with a long history of establishing career pathways in various industries by providing structured, paid on-the-job learning experiences combined with job-related technical instruction with a mentor that leads to a nationally recognized credential. To learn more about Registered Apprenticeships, visit apprenticeship.gov.

- **Establish or expand loan forgiveness or service scholarship programs.** These programs can also include a commitment to teach in a high need area for a minimum number of years.

Professionalisation of School Leadership Theoretical and Analytical Perspectives: A Literature Review

Kimberly J. Soderholm

Abstract

Professionalisation of School Leadership: Theoretical and Analytical Perspectives explores the question of whether school leadership is a profession and if school leaders are professionals. By combining research from professional studies and school leadership the authors walk readers through their research and to its conclusion.

School Leadership as an Emerging Profession

Although most school leaders began as teachers and may still participate in teacher organizations, they have differentiated themselves through specialized training and unique organizations. This book explores whether the distinct career of a school leader can be considered a profession. Different definitions of profession are discussed for consideration. A sociological definition of professions states that it must contain, at least, the following traits: a formal knowledge base, a long course of education, a code of ethics, autonomy in the workplace, and a shared identity and language. The organizational definition of professions requires that certain standards are followed and those can be changed by a leader of the organization. In this definition a profession is governed by state regulation or some other form of control. The authors state that "Organizational professionalism as a political intervention, which, in fact, is de-professionalizing." The authors pose that school leadership is not yet a profession. It is an emerging profession. The aim is to determine what endeavors are needed to develop the profession of school leadership.

Professions and Professionalisation – A Short Review

An in-depth discussion of traits and definition of a profession and what it means to be a professional. Both the sociological and organizational definitions are explored in more detail. According to the sociological definition of a profession, it is an occupation that contains the following traits: extensive education, a formal knowledge base, technical skills, work ethic that is dedicated to the public good, a shared identity and language, professional organization, autonomy in work, collegiate guidelines, and certified authorization. Within the sociological definition falls the work of Talcott Parsons (1968). Here is outlined the functional description of a profession. Professions functionally include high technical competence, is universalistic, functionally specific, and affectively neutral. The following are traits of a profession: members are bound by identity, once the join few will leave, members share common values, there is a common language not fully understood by outsiders, the community has power over members, and the next generation is created through training (Goode, 1957). Millerson (1964), states that a profession contains skills based on theoretical knowledge, requires training and education, competence is indicated by passing a test, there is a code of conduct, the service is for the public good, and the profession is organized. The text points out that school leaders as a group do not have control over their own standards, those standards are determined by the state or government. For this reason, school leaders may not be considered a profession. Weber (1921) introduces the ideas of the Power Approach. He states that modern education which includes the passing of formal exams is likened to a ruling class from more ancient times. This structure is created so that knowledge is a means to increase power and social distance between the professional and the client. There are "Neo-Weberians" believe that a profession is a way to control the occupation. Professions and professionals can also be defined through an organizational approach. Professions are large, market-based organizations that are increasingly standardized to match evaluations and contracts. Professions that focus on public service are becoming more "organized" and have less autonomy than more private professions like engineers and architects.

The Knowledge Base of School Leadership

The knowledge base of a profession refers to the knowledge required to perform the profession. It includes the theory that is taught through schooling and verified through

examinations and the best practices passed down from previous practitioners. Knowledge base is different from profession to profession. The functional approach to professions considers knowledge base as the science behind the profession, the progress of the profession, and the university that teaches the profession. The power approach considers knowledge base as the mechanism that that legitimizes social separation by forming social classes. The body of knowledge surrounding school leadership began to develop in the 18th and 19th centuries. One factor that contributes to the confusion of whether school leadership is a profession is the fact that it shares required knowledge base with many other fields. In fact, there are different positions in school leadership and some of these require different education and preparation. Some of these fields that share common knowledge with school leaders are teachers, psychologists, economists, philosophers, and historians.

Education and Preparation of School Leaders

Internationally it is a goal to identify the best school leadership education. Although there are best practices, the act of education varies depending on the age, culture, and needs of the student population. Therefore, what might be proper pedagogy for a school leader in one instance might not fulfill the needs of a school leader in a different instance. Research shows that university programs for educational leadership have changed over time. The research also shows that effective programs contain the following features: rigorous selection, research-based content, field-based internships, mentors, and collaboration between universities and school districts. It is reported that many leaders do not feel properly prepared for their role.

There is a discussion of which is more important theory or practice. It was found that universities push theory over practice and that less formal instruction values practice over theory. (Zhang and Brundrett 2010) report that school leaders prefer experiential learning as it provides better training on handling day to day tasks. The idea of applying more rigorous standards to the selection of school leaders in presented. It is noted that educational leadership candidates often score very low on the Graduate Record Examination (GRE). Nordic education focuses on teaching leadership development and are not a prerequisite for leader appointment as in the United States of America.

Ethics in School Leadership

According to the sociological definition of a profession it is required to have a professional code of ethics. Although results and accountability are important in Danish schools, it is important for them not to neglect the other equally important purposes for schooling. Some of these other purposes for schooling include freedom, equality, and democracy. The United Kingdom identifies seven points involved in ethical leadership and they are selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty, and leadership. Many school leaders find the data driven model to prove effectiveness creates ethical pressure. The data-driven school does not always allow for leadership that is value driving and caring. The trend of distributed leadership, where a collaborative approach to leadership is implemented, can increase the likelihood of ethical pressure due to the diffused responsibility presented in that model. Ethical reflect may need to be utilized when there is a conflict between personal values and professional or organizational values.

Working Conditions and Work Life

A large part of being considered a profession is the ability to self-govern. A school that has autonomy can make its own decisions. Some areas in which decisions are made are student admissions, lesson times, choice of textbooks, hiring teachers, firing teachers, choice of subject to be taught, and allocation of resources. (Heffernan 2018) Research has shown that school achievement is associated with school autonomy. Schools with more autonomy can make decisions that positively impact their clients. Effective school leaders utilize professional judgement that has been built over time based on the outcome of historical decisions. They build trust through collaborating with stakeholders. And with knowledge built over time they can make decisions that will positively impact the school environment. Trends show that school are being given more autonomy. However, this autonomy comes with more requirements of accountability. School leaders need to learn to shed their prior roles, typically as teachers. School leaders report feelings of loneliness, accusations, loss of identity, and loss of belonging.

Discussion

Based on the finding of this book, school leadership is not yet a profession. It is however, on its way to becoming a profession and can be considered a semi-profession. The advantage of

becoming a profession allows school leaders to build on their skill set and community as well as lead to their legitimacy. The disadvantages of school leadership becoming a profession include the divide between themselves and the teachers they once were as well as the degrees of separation from their client, the student. Professionalization creates a separate language and identity which wideness the gap that has already been created.

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Book Review: Lead like a Pirate: Make Schools Amazing for your Students and Staff

Johanna Mirino

The book "Lead like a Pirate" written by Shelley Burgess and Beth Houf, is an inspirational and easy to read text for every passionate leader in the educational field. The authors of the book wrote it with the purpose of creating a practical guide for leaders in the educational field that brings out the passion of teaching in a classroom and incorporates it into leadership. The book is centered on reviving the passion and purpose that educational leaders may have lost through their day to day struggles of juggling their responsibilities as a principal. The authors strive to relight that spark of passion in every principal, by reminding them why they came into the field of education in the first place. Along with reigniting passion for education, the authors demonstrate the parallels in teaching and the role of a principal.

The authors' writing approach feels very transparent and authentic throughout the book. The author Beth Houf, begins demonstrating that transparency at the very beginning by giving the reader an insight of how overwhelmed she felt in her role as principal, to the point that she felt she was ready for a change. Like most individuals in the educational field Houf was losing focus on what is really important in the role of a leader. Shelly Burgess begins by giving the reader a snapshot of her experience when she took on a very challenging in role of a new principal of a school that was made up of 90% hispanic/latino students of which most were identified as ELLs that were labeled as "socioeconomically disadvantaged". She describes her success being due to the fact that she focused her energy on transforming the culture of her new school from a place of low staff morale, to a place where staff felt proud to work at the school. Burgess explains she focused on supporting her staff and all their efforts while creating a place where students went to learn and thrive.

The authors compare leadership in education to leading like a pirate by being courageous in order to "inspire and influence others to follow them even in the face of great risk." The treasure that Pirate leaders look for are the ways make to make school an extraordinary place for

students, staff, parents and communities by letting their passion for learning navigate their journey. Pirate leaders value and bring out the unique talents of every crew member through collaboration and trusting the abilities and gifts of their crew members. Pirate leaders understand that their primary role is "culture first, culture next, culture always."

Main Themes

One of the main themes in the book is the idea that passion is the foundation to creating a an environment where students and teachers are excited to learn and grow together. Passion driven leadership is especially powerful in education. The authors' belief is that educators should not lose their passion when they move into a leadership position, in other words, becoming a principal should not change who you are. Every leader has their own unique "Pirate" way of making a difference in their school based on the needs of their staff and students.

The authors structured their book into four different sections that go over everything form leading like a pirate, to effective strategies for building leadership, and introducing a coaching model that is founded on encouragement and feedback. The first section begins by identifying leadership as a content passion. Principals are passionate about leadership and their passion should be the compass of their journey as a leader. With passion principals can empower their teachers to use every resource to make their classrooms an amazing place for their students to learn and grow everyday. Principals can also use passion to drive collaboration among staff to ensure that every teacher knows they have a voice and their voice is heard and valued.

The authors explain the importance of understanding your passions in and out of work and how if affects your role as a leader. The authors demonstrate this in a very transparent way by sharing their work passions and their personal passions. Another important topic the authors touch on about passion is the fact that we should feel comfortable with not being passionate about every part of our role as a leader. There are many tasks and duties we may need to tackle as a leader and its ok not to feel passionate about it. But the authors quickly explain how our passions are what we should tap into in order to tackle those tasks in the most effective ways possible. Our passions help us identify the positive side of those tasks that we may not be too passionate about.

As a leader it is crucial to also take into consideration your staff's passions. Embracing and encouraging the passions of your staff is a vital piece of the puzzle when nurturing the

culture of your school. Your staff's passions are in turn a key resource in creating that amazing place where your staff and students want to be. The author's provide a fun strategy that can be applied anywhere form a faculty meeting, to a teachers' lounge or even a classroom. The activity involves having teachers name their top three favorite movies and identify their common theme and how it relates to their passion as educators. In conclusion the purpose for identifying passions is to identify what drives the people around you.

Another common theme is the book is the importance of immersing yourself in the tasks that have the most impact on student leaning and culture. The author's do an outstanding job explaining the way jobs sometimes get in the way of the work that creates the most value in our roles as leaders. It is crucial to not get caught up in daily tasks at the expense of what matters most. In order to be a highly effective leader you need to implement systems and strategies that give you the opportunity to spend the highest percentage of your time doing the most impactful work.

The theme of immersion focuses on being intentional and purposeful with the time that we have everyday when we get to our schools; that is how we create a positive culture. Immersion refers to being a part of the struggles that teachers face in the classroom and being a part of honest conversations about teaching in your school. Immersion refers to actively participating and engaging with staff and students by being fully present and intentional with your time at work. Just as the passion theme in the book, the authors provide an activity that can be applied by leaders to ensure that they are being intentional about their time and tasks. The authors present the idea of using three different sized sticky notes to list all their daily/weekly tasks from most impactful on student learning to least impactful on student learning. Using these sticky notes can help categorize those tasks so that the leader can organize their time in the most purposeful way possible.

Another main theme developed in the book is the need for leaders to create rapport and to build relationships with their staff by earning their trust. The authors discuss the positive impact that rapport has on the culture of a school, but they also emphasize that rapport must be built on trust. Trust is what ensures that conversations you have with your staff are authentic and meaningful. Building genuine relationships with your staff can only be powerful if there is mutual trust. Trust is what opens doors into genuine conversations with your teachers, trust is the key to having effective conversations with parents and the community. Trust is what allows you

to get a true picture of what your teachers and students need. According to the authors nothing leaders do matters without the trust of their teams. Trust is the foundation for building rapport and building strong relationships to create a positive school culture. Effective leaders take advantage of every opportunity to have authentic interactions and conversations with their staff.

Throughout the book the authors maintain a very transparent tone as they remind the reader of the importance of getting to know your staff and letting them get to know you. They discuss the significance of allowing your staff to get to know what you're passionate about. When explaining this the theory of transparency the authors remind the reader that Pirate leaders must connect or relate to their staff in order to gain their trust. A strategy the authors provide for building these transparent relationships founded on trust is as simple as being accessible to your staff and students. Being present and having open communication goes a long way when getting to know your staff and having them get to know you. Demonstrating appreciation for your staff is another strategy the authors provide as a practical way to build rapport and positive relationships with your staff. Making sure your staff feels appreciated on a personal level can go a very long way in your journey of becoming a Pirate Leader.

Another main theme discussed in the book is power of enthusiasm. The authors narrate some first hand experiences in which they transformed students' outlook on going to school by simply infusing enthusiasm into their work. The enthusiasm discussed in the book embodies the enthusiasm of cheerleaders rooting for their school. Teachers and administrators can radiate positivity into their schools by celebrating success and mistakes alike, inspiring to reignite passion, and by smiling when people need it most. The authors demonstrate how to embrace and model positivity and enthusiasm for their staff and students. According to the authors enthusiasm has the power to make your staff and students want to come to school to learn and grow together. Pirate leaders are committed to cheering on all the people that work and learn at their school. Enthusiasm is a key component to building a positive school culture.

Key Quotes

One key quote from the book is, *"We have to be intentional about taking control of our daily schedules and prioritizing the most powerful work."* (Pg. 20) This quote was stated within the chapter that discusses immersion. This quote really encompasses what that whole chapter is about. It is reminding the reader that in order to be a highly effective leader we must be able to

distinguish the tasks that take up most of our time, and the tasks that actually make an impact on our students' learning. This quote reminds us to take control of the time that we have each day and make decisions based on what matters and not what needs to get done on a checklist. The word intentional in this quote is the most powerful word because by being intentional we can be purposeful with our time as a leader, and make a bigger impact in our students lives. Leading daily with purpose and intention is a key component to leading like a Pirate.

Another key quote form the book is, *"Nothing leaders do matters much without the trust of their teams and communities."*(Pg. 31) This quote was stated within the chapter that discusses rapport. The authors strategically placed this quote in the most powerful place it could be in the book because yes rapport is very important to build, but no matter how much work a leader puts in and no matter how much rapport is built nothing matters if they have not gained their staff's trust. With this quote the authors dive into the power of trust and how debilitating it can be for a leader if they lack their staff's, their student's or their communities trust. That quote leads right into another key quote in the book also relating to trust, *"Trust is the oxygen of our school systems. You can't see it, hear it, touch it or feel it, but without it, you will find yourself struggling to survive."* (Pg. 31)The authors utilize this quote to illustrate how vital trust is in your leadership role and the culture of your school. If you gain nothing more than your staffs, your students, and your communities trust than you have achieved a great deal within your role of a leader in your school. Trust must be the very foundation of everything you do before you even think of doing it.

<div align="center">Strengths and Weaknesses</div>

There are many strong points in this book, trust and passion being the most important and pivotal points of this book. Both trust and passion go hand in hand when beginning your journey of leading your school like a Pirate. Another strong point in this book is the author's ability to be transparent and genuine with their readers. The transparency really changes the dynamics of the text by making the reader feel understood and engaged through the entire book. The authors also provide an easy to read straightforward structure that resonates throughout the entire book. Houf and Burgess provide personal insights, theories and practical ways to implement the strategies that they suggest. Throughout the book students learning remains the focus and purpose of leading like a Pirate. The book is inspirational and engaging because of how relatable the authors

made each topic for educators. The authors were not afraid to share their own struggles and frustrations in order to better support the reader with their journey to becoming Pirate leaders.

When analyzing it is very difficult to identify a weak point in the book, but I would have to say lack of research may be considered a weak point for some readers. The authors focus more on their own experiences and make recommendations based on what has worked for them. Some readers may want to hear more about strategies that can support the author's theories, but also be research based practices.

<div align="center">Comparison to Fullan</div>

When comparing this book to Fullan's text there are many evident similarities. Both books focus on having a compass to guide us in our leadership roles. Fullan states that as leaders we should have a moral compass to help us navigate our journey of leadership. Houf and Burgess believe passion should be the compass that navigates our decisions as we navigate leading like a Pirate. Both books circle back to the idea that effective leaders foster moral purpose by building strong relationships founded on trust, through communication, collaboration, positivity and enthusiasm. Both books keep us grounded on the fact that we must remain human and remember that what we do as educational leaders is ultimately for the success of our students. Becoming an administrator should not change who we are as a person, in fact we should let our passions shine bright so that we can inspire others to be passionate enough to also make a difference.

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Book Review: Instructional Leadership: Creating Practice Out of Theory

Jasmine A. Suarez

Abstract

Peter M. Dewitt has held a position in education for 19 years as to which he was a principal for 8 years. It was during Dewitt's sixth year as principal that he noticed a shift coming within the educational realm. The shift that came cause Dewitt to change his career path and become a well-known instructional leadership coach. Instructional leadership is a term that has risen to popularity, and many are trying to define it. In Dewitt's book *Instructional Leadership: Creating Practice Out of Theory*, he defines six components that instructional leaders should focus on. He uses his simplified version of Program Logic Model to demonstrate just how these components fit into a school site based on scenarios. As each chapter develops, Author Dewitt takes the reader on a step-by-step guide as to how to use his version of the Program Logic Model while focusing on the six components listed.

Purpose and Thesis

 Peter M. Dewitt started his career in education as a classroom teacher and soon submerged as a school principal. At the beginning of his journey, he had no experience or knowledge on what it meant to be a leader. It was in that very moment that Dewitt's road to understanding leadership began. In his short span of being a principal for eight years, Dewitt's job description was quickly changing with the world around him.

As Dewitt comes to draw a definition for instructional leadership, he creates a model, Logic Model, that details the six main components instructional leaders must focus on.

Instructional leadership was published due to the demand for the topic Dewitt was faced with during his instructional workshops. This concept of instructional leadership was not foreign to him as it is one that is repeatedly discussed or pinpointed in his other books. As Dewitt delves

deeper into instructional leadership and how he came to understand it, he makes an outstanding point to remind readers that instructional leaders must be open to making mistakes in front of their staff and put learning at the core of their mission. He thoroughly reminds readers through each chapter that patience and validity should always be present within their Program Logic Model.

Main Themes

Dewitt outlines six components that instructional leaders must entail: implementation, learning, student engagement, instructional strategies, efficacy, and evaluation of impact. The main message behind his book is the use of his simplified version of Program Logic. He uses his Program Logic Model through each component to show leaders how to effectively breakdown, individualize, and use the component to build it within their school site. Through each chapter he takes a component an instructional leader focuses on and applies it to his version of the Program Logic Model. As he creates the example Program Logic Model, he actively expresses what this would look like within the school site. At its entirety, he develops guided questions for leaders to delve on along with moments made to reflect.

Dewitt's Program Logic Model comes into practice when adapting a new initiative. This multi-level concept map serves as a visual manipulative to work through an initiative being implemented into the school site. Essentially the leaders and teachers will take into account the needs, inputs, activities, outputs, and impact the proposed plan can bring to the school site. For the needs, leaders and teachers are considering the lack of something they see in their school gathered through data collected. The needs area is answered by having discussions that are present and valuable in what occurs within classrooms. The input section relies on deciding what resources are needed to properly create a positive impact. Is there a tool the school site could be using but just need to gain access to? These outputs must be concise and thoroughly discussed to make sure they are wholesomely used and not discarded after some time. As for activities, what tasks will help the improvement plan? Dewitt states that most of the time, principals take on these roles and responsibilities without knowing why they must. Once the Program Logic Model

is nearly filled in, it moves into the output phase. The team discusses what steps need to occur in order to move the initiative forward. The last piece of Dewitt's Program Logic Model is impact. Analyzation is a factor that is present in any initiative plan. The main question that is answered is how this initiative plan helps stakeholders. Leaders want these plans to succeed as they tackle deep issues that are being presented within their classrooms. It is through these phases that Dewitt addresses the six components instructional leaders focus on.

The focus of *Instructional Leadership* is to put forward an effective and valid practice on implementation, learning, student engagement, instructional strategies, efficacy, and evaluation of impact. The six components are precise to work towards creating an impactful vision to target quality learning. Dewitt believes in targeting quality learning through the adjustment of school climate. In the implementation component, Dewitt introduces his Program Logic Model and the crucialness behind being patient when beginning a new initiative into the school site. As Dewitt introduces his Program Logic Model, he is sure to express how fluid and flexible this model is to the steps needed to properly implement any new factor into the school site. His Program Logic Model was made to be revised as many times as needed to ensure the quality of work. The learning component brings heat to the discussion of just how much content expertise instructional leaders should have. Dewitt states that instructional leaders and teachers need to understand how students are learning with what means they are learning. Dewitt highlights that student engagement and instructional strategies are two components that really go hand in hand with one another. Instructional strategies need to consider student engagement through academic, behavioral, and cognitive engagement. It is through these two components, that instructional leaders and teachers focus on methods of learning and modeling how to learn rather than just passing along knowledge. In the component of efficacy, Dewitt brings attention to working collaboratively. He refers to it as collective efficacy and when described details the method of creating a group, creating a goal focused on learning, and using that goal to have a meaningful impact on student learning. In the last component, evaluation of impact, data is brought front and center to the initiative. Instructional leaders must focus their efforts on practice and how it is increasing students learning and engagement.

Key Quotes

"When leaders are under the weight of too many initiatives, it breeds reactive leadership as opposed to proactive leadership." (Pg. 21)- Dewitt drives his ideology with the root that instructional leaders must learn to balance their time and work accordingly. Early in the book, he states that there must be a balance between completing mandated tasks and tasks you believe will help improve your school site (p.xviii).

"We need to combine how students learn with what students learn, and follow up by discussing the best ways to engage students in that learning." (Pg. 49)- Teachers serve to educate students and inspire but Dewitt believes that many leaders lose sight of this goal when engaging in walkthroughs or talks with educators. He proposes that focus is placed on student engagement through the act of inspiration. He ties this relation into the ideology that many believe leaders should have content expertise rather than an understanding for learning.

"Social-emotional learning may be a controversial topic, and critics believe there isn't a place for it in our schools, but the reality of our time in education is that we cannot neglect to implement social-emotional learning practices." (Pg. 67)- Many that have read Dewitt's work have commented that instructional leadership is a focus that has just gained attraction even though it has always been viable within education. The same could be said about social-emotional learning (SEL). SEL is a focus that has always existed but has not been given the attention it deserves. Schools strongly believe that classrooms should not encompass SEL as it is a subject of great bias and sensitivity. It is important that Dewitt brought focus to SEL through student engagement as one of the key focuses of instructional leadership.

"Being an instructional leader is about understanding academic engagement and then focusing on the instructional strategies that will help build that engagement." (Pg. 86)- Dewitt explains that academic engagement encompasses social-emotional engagement as well as cognitive engagement. In order to build academic engagement within a classroom, leaders and teachers must focus on implementing evidence-based practices that establish ways of learning rather than just trying to pass on knowledge to the students in the classroom.

Strengths and Weaknesses

Dewitt's greatest strength in this book is his diversity to applying the six components he details. In each chapter, he takes the time to build on the meaning of the component and apply it to his Program Logic Model. Dewitt relies his ideology heavily on research whether it's his own research or research he has analyzed. It is through the use of various research, that the reader can analyze the research, use Dewitt's ideology, and apply it to their own ideology. Therefore, making the work relatable and essentially their own. It makes the process of adapting the concept feasible and malleable.

The influx of research does have the set back of being overwhelming. It is through its constant reference that it may seem hard to gather Dewitt's personal connection to the ideology he is trying to detail. Although, this rarely occurs throughout the read, it does require an in-depth amount of reading to fully acknowledge and understand what Dewitt is trying to portray.

Comparison to Fullan

Author Dewitt is one that uses research extensively throughout his book. Every point he makes, he is always relating it to research he has conducted or read of. It is within that context that without a doubt he would stumble upon Michael Fullan's research. Fullan and Dewitt focus on instructional leadership and have spent a worthwhile amount of time putting their own theories into practice.

Michael Fullan bases his research on the pretense that there are also five components leaders must focus on to bring change. He outlines that these five components are: moral purpose, understanding change, building relationships, creating and sharing knowledge, and creating coherence. These components may seem different than Dewitt's but in their core their functioning remains the same. Dewitt ropes in Fullan's five components to his six components in various manners. Through his research, Dewitt claims and stakes the important of building relationships and creating and sharing knowledge. In chapter 5, Dewitt states that engagement is classified under academic engagement to which he tackles them separately throughout his components. Dewitt states that academic engagement can be split into behavioral, emotional, and cognitive. It is through the research of this split, that Dewitt embodies the need to address building relationships through student engagement. He quickly makes the connection that

academic engagement cannot occur without social-emotional learning. Principals and educators fail to realize at times that once a student leaves school grounds, there is no telling what occurs in their lives. It is then that teachers must actively work to build rapport amongst their students to factor in social-emotional learning into the environment. It is through the use of emotional intelligence that a learning environment can successfully thrive.

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Book Review: Swimming in the Deep End: Four Foundational Skills for Leading Successful School Initiatives

Yvana Puerto

School leaders face many complex and difficult challenges when implementing new initiatives in their school. Jennifer Abrams addresses these challenges and explains how to overcome it in her book *Swimming in the Deep End*. Abrams has dedicated over 26 years of her life to providing support to adults in communication and collaboration skills. She has led professional developments on varying topics, facilitated workshops for teachers and administrators, and presented at different annual conferences. Abrams has received recognition for all her work and was named Entrepreneur of the Year by the International Academy of Educational Entrepreneurship. She has published several books with *Swimming in the Deep End* being one of her newest books. Abrams wrote this book in response to the ever-growing nature of change in schools, and the need for leaders to be able to overcome these challenges in positive ways.

Purpose and Thesis

The book was created with the purpose of supporting educators and administrators in identifying "deep end" skills in their current role and help them grow in their leadership skills whether they are a new or experienced leader. Abrams states in her introduction, "… I want to write for readers who want to push themselves to be more capable and courageous during moments of change" (Pg.11). In her book, the author defines the metaphor "deep end" as an area where one leaves their comfort zone and faces difficult tasks head on to make a positive change. Abrams argues four foundational skills in order to be successful in the "deep end." The four foundational skills are: thinking before we speak, preempting resistance, responding to resistance, and managing ourselves through change and resistance. In addition to these foundational skills, there are three "deep-end" skills that one must be mindful of in order to effectively apply the foundational skills. The "deep end" skills are cognitive, social, and psychological skills. The author provides strategies and resources related to each foundational

skill in order to make certain her readers are able to acquire the foundational skills she proposes in her book. Abrams states, "while this book isn't an immediate Coast Guard rescue, it does provide support… to help you build the skills to swim in the deep end and support you in facing whatever change is coming to you or that you are making happen at your site" (Pg.12).

Summary and Main Themes

Swimming in the Deep End focuses primarily on leaders implementing new initiatives (deep end challenges) at their school sites that will bring on inevitable resistance to change. This book is broken into four chapters in which each chapter focuses on one of the four foundational skills previously mentioned. In addition to the four chapters, Abrams includes an introduction and epilogue in her book. In the introduction, the author provides personal experience and an explanation of her metaphor "swimming in the deep end." Furthermore, Abrams defines what deep end challenges may look like in a school setting and provides a preassessment for readers to complete based on the four foundational skills. The epilogue contains additional resources and reflection questions for readers.

The first foundational skill, which is thinking before we speak, is centered on emotional intelligence and cognitive abilities. The author expresses how leaders should be cognizant of the emotions, ideas, and beliefs of others when planning how to share a new initiative with staff members. Abrams makes it a point that leaders have a responsibility in shaping the message in a manner that will reduce negative reactions. In other words, leaders must carefully plan how they will present the new initiative and the plan of implementation to staff to avoid confusion and disagreement. One method to do this is to scaffold and teach how to implement the plan effectively. Additionally, helping staff understand the need for this change will bring about good communication among administrators and teachers. Abrams states "consistency, communication, and transparency will help team members take ownership of the decisions that have been put in place for the initiative and make the process easier" (Pg.37).

Abrams' second foundational skill is "preempting resistance." This skill centers on one's ability to use social intelligence in order to understand others' anxieties, concerns, and overall point of view. As a leader, resistance to change is expected no matter how carefully you think about your plan before speaking (foundational skill one). Leaders must know how their initiative

aligns with staff members' preconceived notions and working style in order to expect what their response to the new initiative may be. Being able to know and expect staff members' response to change permits leaders to think about how they will respond and address the conversation in a positive way. It enables leaders to carefully choose and analyze their words; whereas, when you are unexpecting of resistance, it can result in more defensive language that does not allow for positive growth in implementing a new initiative. This leads us into Abrams third foundational skill of responding to resistance. Leaders must formulate their response to resistant behaviors shown by coworkers. Abrams states how "deep-end leaders need to understand that others will be triggered, and, in response, they need to respond, not react" (Pg.57). Leaders must not respond defensively or place blame on others. Instead, they should be mindful of how they speak, what words they use, and what their body language demonstrates to others.

Abrams' fourth and final foundational skill is "managing yourself through change and resistance." This foundational skill is focused primarily on the mental, physical, psychological effect deep end challenges may have on a leader. Abrams emphasizes the importance of leaders having resilience and caring for themselves amid the difficult tasks they must face. The author shares how a leader cannot care and help others unless they care and help themselves.

In order to support her thesis and suggested strategies, Abrams cited articles written by researchers who found similar findings/results as hers throughout her book. The author used 179 references and resources from books, journal articles, newspaper articles, and blogs. In addition to using references, she described and supported her viewpoints with real life examples she or people she knows have experienced. She provided scenarios and reflection questions to help readers establish a connection with the information she presented.

Comparisons to Michael Fullan's *Leading in a Culture of Change* book

There were a few similarities and differences noted between the two books *Swimming in the Deep End* and *Leading in a Culture of Change*. Firstly, both books discuss resistance to change and how it should be expected. Abrams bases her four foundational skills on the theory that resistance to change is expected and natural when change occurs. Abrams states, "given that resistance to change is commonplace and inevitable, the focus on resistance in these foundational skills should not be unexpected" (Pg.8). Foundational skills two and three, which are

"preempting resistance" and "responding to resistance," are based on this initial belief. The author teaches readers to think of others and why they may respond the way they do, as well as how to properly respond to these reactions. Yet, Fullan addresses this expected resistance in a different manner. Fullan states leaders should embrace resistance as it is an opportunity for learning and seeing things in a new way. He believes that leaders who listen to those who resist change and their reasons for this resistance can lead to new ideas, breakthroughs, and solutions to problems not yet thought of. Fullan states, "the absence of conflict can be a sign of decay" (Pg.74). In other words, conflict is healthy and a great way for growth in the workplace.

Secondly, both Abrams and Fullan discuss the importance of leaders being able to use social skills, emotional intelligence, and personal skills. In *Swimming in the Deep End*, these skills are critical in being able to implement the foundational skills. For example, when a leader is preempting resistance, as defined in chapter two, they must incorporate social intelligence to know or guess how one may react to change. In *Leading in a Culture of Change*, Fullan discusses the importance of emotional competency. He states, "it should come as no surprise then that the most effective leaders are not the smartest in an IQ sense but are those who combine intellectual brilliance with emotional intelligence" (Pg.71). Fullan established emotional competency sets that include personal skills and social skills. Additionally, both Fullan and Abrams discuss the importance of emotional intelligence. Abrams shares how "educators are in the people business, the development business, the teaching and learning business, which requires us to possess emotional intelligence" (Pg.18). Similarly, Fullan expresses how "mentors who evidence moral purpose, display emotional intelligence, and foster caring relationships and norms of reciprocity for knowledge sharing, show the way" (Pg.132).

Lastly, both authors discuss the importance of leaders getting to know others. Abrams shares her belief of using an allocentric mindset in order to preempt resistance. The author states how "deep-end leaders must maintain awareness of their team members' anxieties and concerns" (Pg. 39). She believes leaders must think about what the needs of the staff members are and what might trigger them to react negatively. Some of these causes for triggers may be based on what their educational beliefs are, experiences with change in the school, personal challenges they may be currently facing, generational beliefs, socioeconomic differences, spiritual values, and more. This is majorly why Abrams emphasizes the importance of leaders carefully choosing how

they propose a new initiative and how to respond in a way that is clarifying and charismatic. Fullan discusses the importance of getting to know employees in order to build positive relationships between one another. When positive and trustful relationships are created between leaders and staff, it allows for trying new things, knowledge sharing, and openness to new ideas. Additionally, when people feel acknowledged and included in decision making, they are more likely to feel a desire to contribute more for a greater purpose.

Strong and Weak Points

While reading the introduction, it was captivating to find a self-assessment meant to be completed in the book. It allows for readers to really put themselves into a leadership mindset in order to make a better connection to the text. This also allowed for reflection and to assess where weaknesses in deep end skills may be. Later in the chapters, Abrams provides strategies for those specific skills seen in the preassessment. It is highly effective to make the text interactive for the reader instead of just reading information that seems unrelatable.

Another strong point is that Abrams organized the information in a way that facilitated and enhanced the understanding of each foundational skill. Each chapter follows a similar structure that makes it easy to peruse and reread valuable and intriguing parts. At the beginning of each chapter, she explained what the foundational skill is and provided examples of it through either personal experience, experience of others, study results, or a combination of the three. She then goes deeper into explaining why the skill is important for a leader to grasp and use in their daily lives. She may sometimes even address common responses that a leader may be thinking as they read the book. For example, in chapter one, Abrams discusses the importance of thinking carefully and planning how to share information about a new initiative with colleagues. She states in the text, "I can hear you already. *This rollout is urgent. Students need our support now, and this change has to happen this semester*" as a response to the reader's thoughts (Pg.19). After her statement, she addresses the concern in a manner that reinforces the use of the foundational skill. After her explanation on the importance of the skill, she dives into the self-assessment questions from the introduction. Here is where she explains the questions, its importance, and strategies to be incorporated by the reader. At the end of each chapter, the author includes a conclusion paragraph summing up the important parts of the chapter and provides three reflection questions for readers. An example of a reflective question the author

used in chapter four is "what two things can you do in the next twenty-four hours to make sure you add more self-care to your day-to-day work?" (Pg. 80). These reflective questions keep readers engaged and drawn to the book.

Not only does Abrams maintain organization throughout her book by following a specific structure, but she includes tables, subheadings, bulleted lists, numbered lists, and sidebars to simplify information and make it comprehensible. The author used sidebars in order to provide additional resources relating to a specific area, to provide scenarios for a topic, or to provide research data presented by a different author. The resource links Abrams provides makes the text more accessible for those who want to learn more about a topic or strategy. The author may also use italicized text in order to define new terms and ensure the reader pays close attention to what that word means because they will be seeing it again further into the chapter. It is very clear that Abrams strategically used text features in her book *Swimming in the Deep End* to make it as comprehensible as possible for readers so they may reap the benefits of instilling the foundational skills.

As previously revealed, Abrams provided many strategies for readers to incorporate in their leadership roles. A strong point of the book is that some of her strategies can be generalized and applied in other aspects of life. For instance, in chapter three, she provides scenarios or examples of some responses people can have as a resistance to change. Abrams states as an illustration how someone may try an intimidation technique by name-calling, threatening, or shouting. She provides an exemplary response to this scenario by saying, "you have every right to feel that way, but no right to express it in an offensive manner. Please restate your objection in a more polite way" (Pg.60). Although this was meant for educational leadership issues, it can also be applied to other situations that may arise in public areas, work settings, family events, or outings with friends. There are many more wonderful and applicable strategies listed throughout the book.

Despite the strengths, there were about 40 cited references that were older than 10 years with the oldest being published in 1913. As the times change, so does research regarding certain topics due to the numerous amounts of studies that emerge. Although some of those studies or sites she referenced may have been true at the time it was written, it could have been disproven years later. This is why it is recommended for authors to use works created within 10 years to

maintain the reliability of the information being distributed. It was also noted there were about 10 articles cited without dates. In addition to the dates of the works that were referenced, there were some articles from untrustworthy sites such as mentalfloss.com and learningtoforgive.com. This can make some arguments implausible, or difficult to believe.

Conclusion

To conclude, *Swimming in the Deep End* takes a closer look at how leaders should handle challenging situations that arise from implementing new initiatives at their school site. There are four primary foundational skills discussed by Abrams that help leaders address resistance to change. The author describes how leaders must think before they speak, preempt resistance, appropriately respond to resistance, and manage themselves through the changes. Abrams' inclusion of text features, references, scenarios, examples, thorough explanations, resources, self-assessment questions, and chapter reflection questions make this book easy to navigate and enjoyable. Overall, it is a great book for people currently in leadership positions, whether they are experienced or new to the job, and anyone that would like to experience professional growth.

References

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