

## Praise for *Stop Fake Work in Education*

“My career has been shaped positively by listening to trusted educators share lessons they’ve learned. Gaylan Nielson and Betty Burks uniquely fit the bill of trusted as they share strategies that help you both avoid the many distractions educators face and focus your attention on what really matters for learning to happen.”

**Raymond J. McNulty**

President, Successful Practices Network  
National Dropout Prevention Center  
New York

“Work smarter, not harder, is the theme of this important book for leaders at all levels of education. Nielson and Burks keep the focus on the main thing—student success—while writing passionately about the features of Real Work and compassionately about the traps of Fake Work. The stories of real school leaders punctuate and bring to life the authors’ transformational design model. The 7 Paths to Real Work provide a clear, accessible, step-by-step approach to doing this work. The hands-on tools and templates will help you get started. *Stop Fake Work in Education* is the rare book that situates strategic thinking and planning in the context of cultural considerations to provide a compelling and credible approach to leading change. Best of all, it is a delightful read that has the ring of authenticity and practicality.”

**Jackie Acree Walsh**

Author and Consultant  
Montgomery, Alabama

“Gaylan Nielson and Betty Burks’s *Stop Fake Work in Education* represents that rare combination in educational writing. It is, at the same time, practical and inspiring, data-driven and idealistic. It serves as an experienced guide—leading good-hearted but foundering educators out of the darkness and confusion of Fake Work up and onto the illuminated higher ground of Real Work. It allows educators to see why even their best efforts—without a shared mission and vision—may have felt unproductive. To support this journey from sometimes chaotic darkness to unified and purposeful light, the book provides extensive object lessons, successful educator stories, engaging exercises, tools, and charts. It speaks to the power of classwork over homework. Best of all, this fine book hopes to encourage an eager and committed community of educators—teachers and administrators—who are focused on encouraging an eager and committed community of students. Read and draw inspiration from this book!”

**David Kranes**

Emeritus Professor of English and Theater  
Salt Lake City, Utah

“This book is not an instructional manual of how to teach students more effectively. Conversely, it is a toolbox for educators—an incredible playbook filled with the necessary tools to create an extraordinary organizational culture and learning environment. The book provides educators with a structure and the processes to effectively deliver the educational curriculum they have invested so many years of their life to learn. The missing element of alignment, as described in this book, is the critical gap to fill for transferring the education into the educated. Brilliant kit for the educational community!”

**Barry Willingham**

President/CEO of Shangri-La Resort  
Monkey Island, Oklahoma

“One question: Where was this book and information when I began my work in school administration? What a great resource! Whether you are a beginning teacher leader or a seasoned administrator, this book can make your life easier by recognizing and acknowledging the impact that high-performing cultures have on student achievement and how to achieve that culture in your work. This book points to running on a treadmill and getting nowhere, i.e., Fake Work, but most importantly it points to the important strategies to do the real, meaningful, impactful work. This book should serve as a focus of study for all teams.”

**Linda G. Mora**

Associate Director  
Center for Educational Leadership  
Department of Education  
Trinity University  
Deputy Superintendent, Retired, Northside ISD  
San Antonio, Texas

“Reflecting on the sense of urgency to ‘get it right’ in our schools, the book has captured the essence of the real work that must be done to achieve that lofty goal. Commendations are offered, in that the book serves as a

- compelling call to action for educators to become transformative agents of change within schools,
- strong resource and vehicle for strengthening school culture by working both collectively and strategically,
- transformational platform for creating essential schoolwide and systematic change, and
- roadmap for ensuring that we, as educators, remain relentlessly focused on ‘standing on the X.’”

**Diane Cantelli**

Retired Assistant Superintendent  
Poway Unified School System  
San Diego County, California

“The book challenges leaders to aim our collective energy on what matters most in education, the students. The authors give us practical tools to help us let go of the Fake Work that is derailing high-performing school cultures and lay out a path to ensure our Real Work priorities are strategic and successful.”

**Jana Chang**

Educator and Data Use Advocate  
Hawaii

“*Stop Fake Work in Education* provides school leaders with the mindset and associated tool set to keep the main thing the main thing. In the end it is all about student success and removing barriers and distractions from the schoolhouse so that school leaders and teachers can be laser-focused on student outcomes. School leaders that are looking for a ‘how-to guide’ to make this a reality should have this book on their bookshelf.”

**Jeff Goldhorn**

Executive Director  
Education Service Center, Region 20  
San Antonio, Texas

“If they didn’t coin the terms ‘fake work’ and ‘real work’ in education, Nielsen and Burks certainly clarified them and their impact on the lives of students and those who serve them. *Stop Fake Work in Education* provides educators with a clear purpose and path for moving from organizational addiction on the fake to systemwide focus on the real. The authors weave research with practice through artful use of real experiences from real educators who’ve been stymied by the fake work syndrome in their own schools and districts. But Nielsen and Burks don’t stop there . . . throughout the book, they provide practical strategies, tools, and measures for educators to begin their own efforts to focus on the real work.”

**Denise Collier**

Educator, Professor, and Educational Consultant  
Chief Academic Officer, Retired, Dallas ISD  
Dallas, Texas

“As a professional development consultant, I want to align the work we do with teachers and principals with district strategic plans. It’s often difficult, if not impossible. Now I realize that it’s because of Fake Work! When the strategic intent of the district is disconnected from the focus on student success, there is no purpose for professional learning. Nielson and Burks offer a way to cut through the often difficult processes of strategic planning with this thoughtful, fully developed, yet concise guide to creating a plan around the real work of great schools. It’s an easy read and a book from two people who know schools and can guide others in improving student achievement with a careful but easy-to-accomplish process.”

**Christine Drew**

Consultant and Author  
President, Syfr Learning LLC

“This book had me hooked as soon as I read the definition of Fake Work! As educators, we are passionate by nature. We are also notorious for putting a great amount of effort into all we do. Yet how often do we stop and ask ourselves whether our efforts will be matched in value of the output of what we are working on? We don’t! We work and work and work, and look up only to realize that we haven’t moved nearly as far as we set out to. This book encourages and challenges us to evaluate everything we are doing on a daily basis to ensure strategic alignment with our goals. The success of our students depends on us understanding this concept of Fake Work and putting our best effort and energy into the Right Work.”

**Deanna D. Jackson**

Principal, Watts Elementary  
Schertz-Cibolo Universal City ISD  
Schertz, Texas

“As a school superintendent for over two decades and a National Baldrige Examiner, I became consumed by a quote from W. Edwards Deming: ‘If you can’t describe what you are doing as a process, you don’t know what you are doing.’ The greatest challenge in an organization aspiring to align with Deming’s systems approach is to take what many consider an abstract concept and translate to daily actions. The key for us was to help staff understand the concepts, but more importantly give them tools to implement. *Stop Fake Work In Education* is one of the best collections of practical tools for educators aspiring for performance excellence.”

**Greg Gibson**

Superintendent of Schools  
Schertz-Cibolo-Universal City ISD  
Schertz, Texas

“Nielson and Burks reframe the work of schools. They advocate that leaders become discerning and discriminate between fake work and meaningful work. Through scholarly writing, stories from the field, and charts, they have created a hands-on guide for culture building. As a principal and a superintendent, this book would have been invaluable guide. Just the charts alone provide a powerful reflective tool for leaders.”

**Diane P. Zimmerman**

Retired Superintendent, Author  
Suisun, California

“As school districts strive to transform their organizations into systems based on trust, shared values, creativity, innovation, and respect, *Stop Fake Work in Education* offers hope for a better way of working, planning, and collaborating—all focused on student success. Nielson and Burks have pooled their experiences and learning from the fields of education and business to offer readers more effective processes to create new paths to achieve results while transforming their cultures to true learning organizations. Their transformational design model for systemic change provides direction, while highlighting some of the fake

work pitfalls that tend to consume educators' focus and time. From the board room to the classroom, Real Work must become the focus of all, each and every day, preparing students for success in life."

**Johnny Veselka**

Executive Director Emeritus  
Texas Association of School Administrators  
Austin, Texas

"In the world of education, teachers and administrators often deal with multiple initiatives and other demands on both their time and energy, making it so easy to get caught up in doing 'fake work.' This book helps leaders fine tune their work so they can focus on what really matters—kids, what they are learning, and how we know they are learning it. The vignettes provided throughout illustrate the reality of the everyday life of school leaders, showing the tools provided within the text really do help stop the 'fake work.'"

**Shannon Johnson**

Educational Diagnostician, Former Principal  
Schertz, Texas

"Having worked with Betty Burks for many years, I have observed firsthand the effectiveness of the practices identified in this book. Mrs. Burks and Mr. Nielson share research that has allowed them to develop effective strategies focused on how leaders can maximize high-leverage approaches to their work as well as how to recognize distractors that can get in the way of success. This book is a great resource for anyone wanting to increase their effectiveness, by honing in on practices that yield positive results and managing work that can get in the way. Using the approaches in this book will aid in a leader's ability to grow a collaborative climate focused on the 'right work.'"

**Damon J. Edwards**

Deputy Superintendent  
Schertz-Cibolo-Universal City ISD  
Schertz, Texas

"Gaylan Nielson and Betty Burks have nailed it! As a central office administrator who received extensive training around the concept of 'Fake Work' and its impact on people, working harder but accomplishing less is now centered around the topic of education. As a superintendent of schools, I cannot wait to apply the strategies that lead to building a high-performance culture that drives student success through an emphasis on the 'Real Work.' Finally, a book that is practical and easy to apply to the field of education.

**Jose H. Moreno**

Superintendent of Schools  
Robstown ISD  
Robstown, Texas